

PlayStation 3 PSN PSVita PSP

PLAY MAG

The UK's best

THIS ISSUE

SONIC GENERATIONS
COUNTER-STRIKE:
GLOBAL OFFENSIVE
SOUL CALIBUR V
MAX PAYNE 3
SYNDICATE
FAR CRY 3
& MORE...

WORLD EXCLUSIVE SAINTS THE THIRD

WHY THIS EXPLOSION OF GUNS, GIRLS AND GANGS
IS THE MOST SHOCKING GAME YOU'LL EVER PLAY

series secrets
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TOMB RAIDER**
Original creators reveal all

dramatic finale
**ASSASSIN'S CREED
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PC DVD-ROM



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SAINTS ROW

THE THIRD



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Initially thrilling, can this reboot sustain momentum for an entire game?

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Slippin' and slidin' its way into your heart? Apart from rally fans, not quite.

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The official game packs va-va-voom even if it falls short of the finish line.



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hi-def content

How to watch the delicious high-definition content included free on your Play DVD...

STEP ONE

Open DVD and navigate to *On the Play* DVD-ROM

STEP TWO

Click where it says *Click here to open DVD-ROM folder*

STEP THREE

Open the folder that says *HD Trailers*

STEP FOUR

Just double-click the trailer you want to watch!

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98 BLOODRAYNE: BETRAYAL

It's one of the hardest games on PSN, so are you MAN enough? Or woman enough. You play as a woman, see?

98 FROM DUST

One of the most creative, innovative and pleasing games we've played in a long time. Give it a chance! Go on. Try it.

99 RENEGADE OPS

"Modern day *Desert Strike*!" say those who think similar viewpoint and a helicopter means valid comparison.

99 RE: CODE VERONICA X

Only worth buying if you've played it before, which shouldn't make sense.

99 BURNOUT CRASH

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Press **X** to skip to page 18 in the magazine.

INSTALL

Where fact + opinion ÷ PlayStation = the truth





Dead Space 3?

It's not official but from what we've heard, the third in EA's horror series will take place on ice planet Tau Volantis, after Isaac crashes there. He finds Jennifer (a tech-orientated character) and Ellie (returning from *Dead Space 2*). Jennifer is after a group called Rosetta, who want to reverse engineer specific research, while Isaac just wants to stay warm. Possibly.



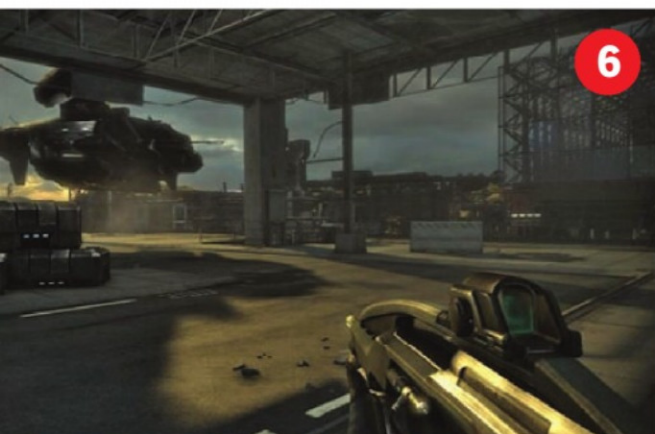
Battlefield 3's million dollars

If you're good at shooting (in videogames, natch) and you enjoy waging war (in videogames, natch) then you might want to enter EA's *Battlefield 3* Worldwide Conquest Tournament in early 2012 (in real life, natch). It will be held online and the prizes amount to a staggering \$1.6 million! Ooof. You better subscribe to **Play** if you win.



DC goes free

DC Universe Online is now free to play! It's not something magic we've pulled off, just something Sony promised it would do to boost the popularity of its MMO. "But how does it make money?" you cry, not really caring. There are further levels of subscriptions and, of course, microtransactions. *DC Universe Online* scored an impressive 80% in **Play**.



10 PlayStation 3 Exclusives For 2012

With the blockbuster line-up of games around the corner, you might be worried about what next year will have in store for your black box of tricks. Worry no more! That's what we do, on **Play**. We stop you worrying. Like this

1 Starhawk

While a lot of players will spend early 2012 still basking in the glow of their honeymoon period with *Modern Warfare 3* or *Battlefield 3*, those seeking a divorce will find a strong multiplayer shooter in *Starhawk*. It'll build on what made *Warhawk* successful but add a single-player story mode, co-op, flying mechs and shift the whole thing to space. We'll have to wait and see just how good it is but the early signs are good.

2 Twisted Metal

Is it good? Is it bad? Opinions are mixed on *Twisted Metal*, which has experienced more delays than the District Line, had a disappointing showing at E3 and was promptly dragged back into the lab at Eat Sleep Play. We're not hitting the Wild Panic button over this one just yet. Instead, we're lightly drumming our fat fingers on the Cause For Concern button, waiting for *Twisted Metal* to prove us wrong.

3 Final Fantasy X HD

We don't know if this will be a full-on remake – it was never released on PC so a cheap HD re-release isn't likely – but either way, it's *Final Fantasy X*! The last 'traditional' *Final Fantasy* before the series quality began to wobble, all Squenix needs to do is add the HD sheen, remove the laughing scene between Tidus and Yuna (that's a serious suggestion, in case Squenix bigwigs are reading) and we're happy.

4 Ni No Kuni

Studio Ghibli (of *Spirited Away* and *Castle In The Sky* fame) plus Level-5 (of *Professor Layton* and *Dark Cloud* fame) equals magic? With the former providing the gorgeous visuals and the latter providing juicy gameplay, not much is known about this game except that it should be a gaming feast fit for a king. Or a queen? For royals, of some sort. Gaming royals. With you on the throne, laughing at peasants playing inferior fare.

5 Yakuza: Dead Souls

Or *Ryu Ga Gotoku: Of The End* as it's known in Japan and definitely won't be known over here. The game that is effectively *Yakuza 5* ditches the *Shenmue*-lite pondering around Japanese back streets for zombie killing and is even rumoured to have a new control system for when it hits our shores to match its change of direction. That *Dead Souls* title is only rumoured, by the way – hopefully Sega will confirm title and European release soon.

6 Dust 514

CCP developed *Eve Online*, which did the business on PC to monster review scores and a huge player base. Now CCP is turning its hand to *Dust 514*. It's an MMOFPS, which stands for Massively Multiplayer Online First-Person Shooter and definitely isn't pronounced 'mumofups', and it will take place in the *Eve Online* universe. *DC Universe Online* has shown MMOs have potential on PlayStation 3. *Dust 514* will now try to exploit it.

7 Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time

If the *Sly* trilogy proved that there's still room to be found on PlayStation 3 for character-led platforming if paced well enough, the levels aren't varied enough and the jokes aren't bad... enough. Or something. That had nostalgia on its side, though. What about a brand-new instalment? Does it keep it retro or go full-out new? The good news is *Thieves In Time* seems to keep with its predecessors. Potential sleeper hit.

8 Final Fantasy Versus XIII

Announced five years ago, this *Final Fantasy* spin-off has been strangely quiet in recent years. That could change as it has only just recently entered full production, so Tetsuya Nomura's promise of bringing a *Kingdom Hearts* battle system with elements of a third-person shooter to *Final Fantasy* will come to fruition. Eventually. Next year might be a bit too optimistic but, hey, optimism is the point of this list.

9 Agent

Status: Unknown. An exclusive PlayStation 3 title by Rockstar North should generate an overwhelming amount of buzz yet with only radio silence to go on, the excitement has long since vanished following the 2007 announcement. *Agent* is still in development, according to Sony CEO Jack Tretton, talking at this year's E3. The question now is whether it's still exclusive and what form the spy game will take.

10 The Last Guardian

While it will probably only sell eight copies worldwide, until Sony figures out how to market a game starring a dog/chicken hybrid, this is already being positioned as the leading light of Sony's line-up next year. Should be amazing.

twitterwatch

It's easy to get your words printed in **Play**. Just follow us at **@PlayMag_UK** or at **facebook.com/PlayMagazineUK** and give us opinions when we demand them!

1. **@PAUL_BOWLER** *Hitman: Absolution* looks fantastic, hope it can live up to all the hype.
2. **@CHRIS1_9_80** Very excited about new *Hitman* game, absolutely loved the last one on PS2.
3. **@FRANKIEADZ** It looks rather good from what's been shown so far...just hope they can keep it the level of quality shown so far.
4. **@MBROADHEAD_** *Hitman* series is legendary.

YOUR SHOUT

HITMAN: ABSOLUTION

“Hitman Absolution will be a familiar experience for fans of the series, while at the same time it will open up the title to newcomers”

WE SAID ISSUE 207



YOUTUBE.COM/
PLAYMAGUK

“My favourite thing about the *Hitman* game were how silent and anonymous 47 was, now he's Rambo. Nice job guys.”

THISISMYTROLLINGFACE

“Agent 47 = sexy (just don't look at his face it's all old and mean)”

BRIBRISXYBSTI

“What happened to *Max Payne*? No new yet?”

KUTCHERO

“I thought *Blood Money* was class, so if this is half as good it will be amazing”

Kelly Brady

facebook.com/playmagazineuk

Adam Narain: No doubt in my mind this will be a good game

Gordon Mclean: As long as they keep the missions as non-linear as possible it should be a belter.

Tony Watson Skelton: Definitely excited but worried about them balling it up. It's been a while since *Blood Money* and they haven't got a great track record since then...

James Ward: I really like the idea and concept of the whole series but i have never actually played the games before

Conor Garratt: I'm not excited for it in particular as I've never played the series before, but I hope it's good because I am interested in any good game.

INSTANT EXPERT

All of the pros with none of the prose

GO LOUD!

Artyom's mission will see him have to engage in both covert and guns-blazing approaches. Shooting lights with silenced weapons will see him able to move undetected, but there's also heavy weapons that he can use to mow down foes.

PRISONER CELL BLOCK 'M'

Key to Artyom's mission is a mysterious stranger known only as 'the prisoner', who has fallen captive to opposition forces and is being transported around the metro. Artyom has to retrieve the prisoner before any further ill befalls him. Seeing as he's being held by the Nazis, he better get a move on.

ENGINEERING SUCCESS

Developer 4A Games' proprietary engine is absolutely stunning, and has drawn rave reaction since *Last Light* debuted at E3. Particularly excellent is the use of dynamic light such as sweeping head torches, which beautifully contrast the gloomy shadows of the disused underground.

DESTRUCTION DERBY

As befits the decaying nature of the Moscow underground Artyom won't be able to rely on the environment to save his ass from gunfire. The demo we saw showed Artyom ducking behind cover and promptly seeing it get blown away in a hail of bullets, inspiring tactical firefights.

TOPSIDE FREERIDE

The metro may still be gloomy, but positive changes are occurring in Moscow. The air may not yet be pure enough to breathe just yet, but it's far more hospitable than the topside was in *Metro 2033*. Hopefully this means that we'll have to spend less time worrying about whether our gas masks are working or not.

MULTI (DOUBLE) TAP

Metro 2033 was a staunchly single-player game, but *Last Light* will see the introduction of multiplayer modes. Not much has been said of this component, but THQ is promising that it will be 'unique'. We'll be the judge of that.

WAR NEVER CHANGES

With D6's power now known to the different factions of the Moscow metro, civil war has broken out with the Soviets, Nazis and everyone else going at it to decide who'll claim victory. It's up to players to make sure the silo falls into the right hands, although everyone has their own definition of 'right'.

DOWN DOWN DEEPER AND DOWN

Taking place one year after *Metro 2033*, *Last Light* again puts players in the boots of Artyom, a young soldier attempting to find peace in a post-apocalyptic Moscow. After locating the top-secret missile silo named D6 in an attempt to destroy 'The Dark Ones', mutants who attack the survivors, at the end of 2033, a civil war has now broken out to see who'll control D6's massive cache of power.

METRO: LAST LIGHT

Developer 4A Games
Publisher THQ • ETA 2012

twitterwatch



@johntdrake

"Okay battlefield - think I'm not good enough to just jump in and play multiplayer with people I don't know. #worstonmysquad :(""

@PlayMag_UK says: Harmonix's famous PR frontman struggles outside of *Rock Band*. Music can't save you against a sniper.

DOS & DON'TS

Important lessons from Play this month



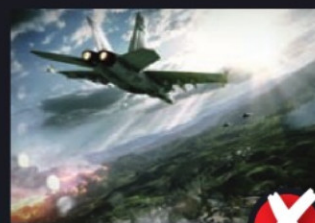
DO: Read our massive six-page *Saints Row: The Third* review. It might surprise you. It might not. Either way, put it in your brain, yeah?



DON'T: Go anywhere near *Supremacy MMA*. It's absolutely atrocious, and may very well cause you to die of shock (PROBABLY NOT).



DO: Take out a big loan to be able to afford all of the games coming out this year. Remember: being responsible shouldn't stop you having fun.



DON'T: Become a *Battlefield*/ *Call Of Duty* fanboy. There's no need, they're both good games: just deal with it.

Read our reviews of all these games starting on page 71

5 Reasons why... VITA WILL BE SUCCESSFUL



1. Nintendo's new addition to the 3DS

Have you seen that new peripheral for the 3DS that adds a second analogue stick/Circle Pad/whatever they want to euphemistically call it? It looks like a bloody dinner tray. What was Nintendo thinking - clearing the decks for Sony to swoop in and steal market share.

2. The games look fantastic

Metal Gear Solid HD? *ZOE HD?* *Uncharted: Golden Abyss?* *Final Fantasy X HD?* Let's face it, the Vita's got a storming line-up of games. Yeah, they might be ports, but we're certain that Sony will swoop in and shore up the library with original games.



3. Online connectivity

Every hardware publisher out there that's not completely mental knows that a strong online presence is vital for competing with Apple. Sony has heeded this advice, with full PlayStation Network/PlayStation 3 integration and connectivity.



4. It has got two analogue sticks

See point 1 for the relevance of this, but finally fixing the PSP's biggest problem will enable us to play actual games on the go without our hands turning into spasming claws of pain.

5. It has to be

Because hey, we all know that Apple is going to own the future, but we're fairly sure that Sony isn't just going to straight up hand it over to them.





INSTALL

Aliens: Colonial Marines

Everything we know

We cut through the noise to let you know what's been confirmed, what's been rumoured and what we want to see in Gearbox's monster FPS...

WHAT HAS BEEN CONFIRMED

LANCE HENRIKSEN RETURNS. He was Bishop in the films and now he plays a synthetic called Rook, though it hasn't been mentioned how he fits into the overall storyline.

PREDATORS WON'T APPEAR. An obvious point, but one that has at least been confirmed by Gearbox.

SPLIT-SCREEN IS IN. They championed split-screen in *Borderlands* and Gearbox will do so again in *Aliens: Colonial Marines*.

RIPLEY IS REFERENCED. Sigourney Weaver won't be involved in *Colonial Marines* in any way but her character will be referenced.

RECHARGING HEALTH. It's the current trend for FPS games and Gearbox won't be running back to the medpacks trope for this title.

HACKING MINI-GAME. These range from woefully out of place (*BioShock*) to masterfully done (*Deus Ex: HR*), so fingers crossed for the latter here.

WHAT HAS BEEN HINTED

POWER LOADER CAN BE USED. Gearbox loves teasing this but won't go so far as to confirm that it's definitely in the game.

FATE OF ALIENS CREW. Gorman blew himself up, Burke ran into an alien while Hudson was dragged down below. Gearbox will shed light on their fate.

WIERZBOWSKI IS BACK? He was one of the first marines to die in *Aliens* yet there's clearly a character in *Colonial Marines* called Wierzbowski. Is he the same character?

SIGHTS ON WEAPONS. This has been mentioned as a possibility and the final decision will say a lot about the type of shooting action we can expect.

DOG ALIEN. Seen in *Alien 3*, Gearbox's Brian Cozzens has suggested this creature could make its way into *Colonial Marines*, too.

PLOT HOLE FIXING. Want to know where the eggs came from at the start of *Alien 3*? *Colonial Marines* will plug this and other plot holes.

WHAT WE WANT

EXTENSIVE CHARACTER CUSTOMISATION. You can customise your characters but we don't know how much. Can we change their haircuts? Helmets? Add gun decals?

HUMANS VS ALIENS DEATHMATCH. *Left 4 Dead* has mastered this but it's not on PlayStation 3 and it would be so, so much better with the *Aliens* licence.

ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK. We want something that apes the original *Aliens* soundtrack, if not flourishes of the original soundtrack itself.

DOOR WELDING. It sounds like a stupid thing to include, until you realise one of the most tense scenes in *Aliens* was simply a crew welding a door shut...

HORDE MODE. *Aliens Vs Predator* sort of did it, but we'd like to see one that was really intense, really dramatic and really bloody hard.

PIPE SHUFFLING. You know how Bishop spent half of *Aliens* shuffling along a pipe he can barely fit in? Yeah. That. In real-time. And it can't be skipped.

TOKYO GAME SHOW IN PICTURES

How massive games exhibitions work on the other side of the world



❖ Square Enix publishes pretty much everything in Japan.



❖ Asura's Wrath is both popular and has A GIANT GLOWING FINGER.



❖ We're really good at Street Fighter X Tekken, even halfway across the world.



❖ Glass is hard to smash through, meaning we couldn't steal all of this.



❖ YOU DAMN RIGHT.



❖ Konami has games other than Metal Gear... oh wait.



❖ Dancing fish guy was happy, whereas Sonic (background) was one morose em eff.



❖ The PlayStation stand never, ever stopped being absolutely rammed.

FIVE GAMES...

You'll never see in Play again
Because... sorry, you just won't



The Idolmaster 2

Out now in Japan, we can't wait to play this... oh, no, wait – we can and will. In fact, we'll just actively avoid it. Thanks.

////////////////////



Macross Last Frontier

Included with the Blu-ray of the new Macross movie, it's... no, we don't really know what it is.

////////////////////



Little Busters: Converted Edition

Well it's a Vita game, so it *might* come out over here... no. No, actually it won't.

////////////////////



Super Robot Wars OG2

You know what? There's a small chance this might end up in the West. Let's see if we're proved wrong by STOMPY ROBOTS.

////////////////////



Tokyo Jungle

We genuinely hope this does get more coverage in the mag, actually. Animals! Fighting! Tokyo!

Q&A



Soul Calibur V & Button Bashers

Hisaharu Tago, producer of Soul Calibur V, talks button-bashing and hardcore fans in the latest addition to the series...

How will you bring hardcore and casual fans together, giving enough depth for hardcore without alienating the casual?

Soul Calibur has a lot of tools that actually satisfy both ends. More than that it has a lot of elements that can attract players to it even if they aren't serious fighters, if they're more interested in the story or the character creator, for instance. But all of these things are all connected to the fact that this is a fighting game. So regardless of which way you're drawn into it you're still going to end up playing a fighting game, and you're still going to end up getting better and better at a fighting game, naturally. So at that point the casual players should slowly begin to improve and gradually begin to fight and even become more serious players. It's the way we're structured and in this regard, compared to other fighters you'll see more unity between the maniacs and casuals.

Can all of the characters combo into Critical Edge moves?

Each character's Critical Edge will be matched to each character's personality or fighting style. So some may not do a launch move and do a Critical Edge right away, with some you may launch, do a few other attacks and then do a Critical Edge. There are varying patterns. For example, with Natsu, hers is a bit hard to use in a combo. Her fighting style is about using her teleportation or sneaky movement to get around and create an opportunity and then – bam! – slam you with a critical. Patroklos, is quite different, he'll create different opportunities, more often he'll launch you and then stick the Critical Edge in that way. And with Natsu since her Critical Edge is a throw it doesn't matter too much if it combos or not.

Is *Soul Calibur V* less button-bashy?

I understand that a lot of players in *Soul Calibur* are button-mashing and there's really nothing wrong with that at all. We have nothing against it to be honest because there are all kinds of players out there. But more than anything there are several things – first with these new systems even if they button-mash they

can enjoy it and notice cool things are happening and are in the game that might spark their interest in learning how to do it. But ahead of that we're also including tutorials that will help them improve, which previous games had but we're improving on them. So since we want to make sure the series lives for a long time we want to take every step possible to convert the player from being just a button masher to actually being at least a mid-range player.

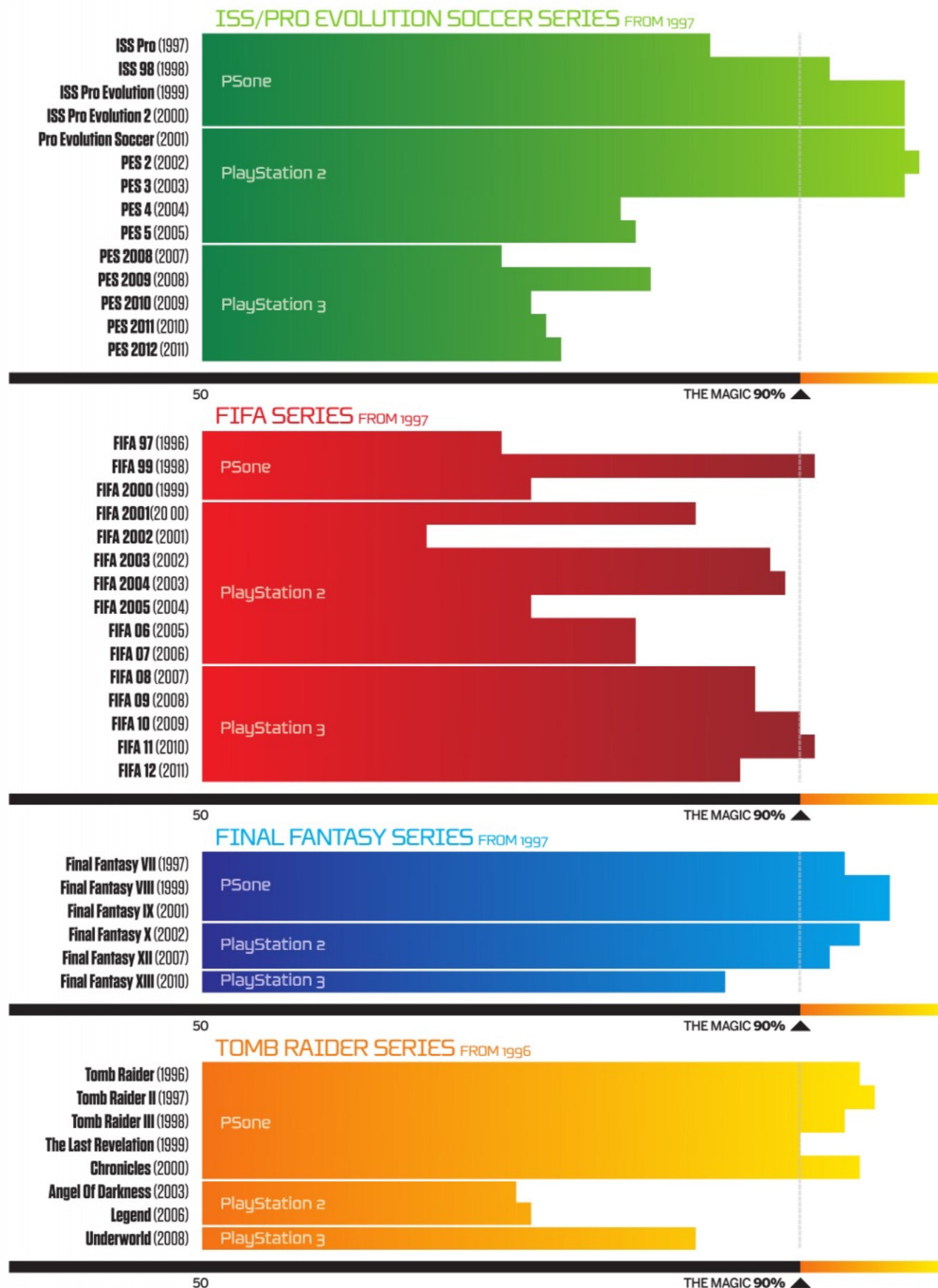
What percentage of characters old, what percentage new?

Well, if you wanted to put it more directly it's about half and half but it isn't that simple. That's because the old characters have many new features or their moves have been really refined, while some of the new characters inherited moves from older ones – for example, Natsu has some of Taki's moves. So whether she's 100 per cent new or not, it's really quite a grey area. But we put a lot of effort into refining the motions of characters like Patroklos or even refining motions for a character like Siegfried. So I'd say 50/50 but it's very grey and hard to quantify.



RISE & FALL & RISE OF PLAYSTATION CLASSICS

Want to know how the longest-running PlayStation series fared over the years? It's lucky you buy the longest-running PlayStation mag then. Here at **Play**, we have all the scores...



Charts

Cataloguing everything that's big in the world of PlayStation

PS3 CHART

- 1** **Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3**
Activision
Activision returns with another Michael Bay-shaming romp. **NA %**
- 2** **Battlefield 3**
EA
Did EA really think it could topple COD? Maybe not, but an excellent game nonetheless. **NA %**
- 3** **FIFA 12**
EA
A step back for the series? Not really, just a sign that EA is running out of new ideas this gen. **86 %**
- 4** **Batman: Arkham City**
Warner Bros.
The best Batman game ever, the best superhero game ever, one of the best games on PS3 ever. **NA %**
- 5** **Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception**
Sony
Another fine slice of action-adventuring starring Drake. **NA %**
- 6** **The Elder Scrolls: Skyrim**
Bethesda
Timeline of events: this came out. Play team disappeared. Now the mag is run by the janitor. **NA %**
- 7** **Deus Ex: Human Revolution**
Square Enix
The game that spawned the 'DICK PUNCH!' caption slips due to EVERY GAME EVER coming out. **91 %**
- 8** **Dead Island**
Deep Silver
Banoi's zombies take a beating, but keep coming back for more, just like in the game. **79 %**
- 9** **Resistance 3**
Sony
A genuinely excellent shooter that finally lives up to the series' promise. R3 is well worth a look. **88 %**
- 10** **Mortal Kombat**
Warner Bros.
No idea how this managed to sneak back in, but welcome back Mortal Kombat. **81 %**

PSP CHART

- 1** **FIFA 12**
EA
Oh looky here, another FIFA game goes to number one. We are not surprised in the slightest. **NA %**
- 2** **Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean**
Disney
Things people like: Lego, Pirates Of The Caribbean. Things that go well together: Lego, POTC. **NA %**
- 3** **WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2011**
THQ
Another wrestling game? Why not? We're not going to speak ill of wrestling fans, because WE ARE THEY. **NA %**
- 4** **Final Fantasy IV: Complete Collection**
Square Enix
Square Enix and FF, doing the business on PSP as per usual. **NA %**
- 5** **Football Manager 2012**
Sega
Who'd be a manager - what with all the stress and abuse? Seemingly everyone, if FM is to be believed. **NA %**

*This chart is compiled from sales, our opinions and the games you're playing. If you're playing a recent, quality title that isn't on our chart, head on over to the forum and let us know about it.

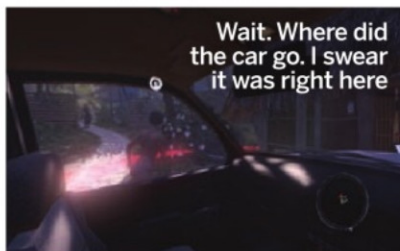
DRIVING LESSONS WITH DEAD ISLAND



First, get into the car from the passenger side of the vehicle



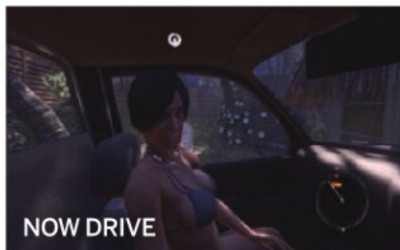
Very good. Now I'll join you and our driving lesson shall begin



Wait. Where did the car go. I swear it was right here



Then I climb through the car door to save precious seconds



NOW DRIVE

18 NOVEMBER SAINTS ROW: THE THIRD

It's brilliant, in the way that a game which lets you create a gold man packing tiny genitalia in a purple thong with the voice of a zombie (the man that is, not the genitalia) is brilliant. Some might scoff at how OTT it is. "Where is the story?" they crow, stroking their goatees in mock superiority before sipping on a glass of port. What we say, as both the reason you should and shouldn't get this, is imagine a game designed by a 13 year old. Except if he's really good at programming. And scripting. Hmm. This analogy isn't working.



THE BIG RELEASE

RELEASELIST Don't forget to pre-order Captain Morgane!

NOVEMBER

Lord Of The Rings: War In The North
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception
Get Up And Dance
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3
Silent Hill: Downpour
EyePet & Friends
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
WWE '12
Dynasty Warriors 7: Xtreme Legends
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7
The New Adventures Of Sherlock Holmes
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection
uDraw Studio: Instant Artist
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City
Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3
Sonic Generations
Disgaea 4: A Promise Unforgotten
Assassin's Creed Revelations
Saints Row: The Third
Need For Speed: The Run
Rayman Origins
Captain Morgane And The Golden Turtle

DECEMBER

Hunter's Trophy
Just Dance 3

JANUARY

SSX
UFC: Undisputed 3

FEBRUARY

Inversion
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning
The Darkness II
Final Fantasy XIII-2
Binary Domain
NeverDead
Asura's Wrath

MARCH

Mass Effect 3
X-COM
Dragon's Dogma
Starhawk
Far Cry 3
Ghost Recon: Future Soldier

Street Fighter X Tekken
Aliens: Colonial Marines

THE REST OF 2012

Tomb Raider
DmC
Darksiders II
BioShock: Infinite
Prototype 2
Armored Core 5
Resident Evil 6
Brothers In Arms: Furious 4
Resistance: Burning Skies
Uncharted: Golden Abyss
Everybody's Golf Vita
Sound Shapes
WipEout 2048
Little Deviants
Hustle Kings Vita
ModNation Racers Vita
Reality Fighters
Super Stardust Delta
LittleBigPlanet Vita

JUST RELEASED



CRYSIS

The notorious story on Crysis was that it needed a nuclear-powered PC beamed from the future to present time to run, otherwise the game would chug like a calculator trying to display a .gif. And now it's here! On PSN! And it's smooth! And it's amazing how far the genre has come in such a short time. Crysis is neither retro classic (not old enough) nor modern day FPS titan (not new enough) but stands tall as an example of when FPS games searched hard for their own identity to stand out. Worth the money and the time before the big guns roll in.

FORWARD PLANNER NOVEMBER 2011

"Wine. It's just fruit juice, innit?" - Dan

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
			 <p>02 UNCHARTED 3 hits the shelves! Or is gently placed upon the shelves by bored HMV and Game staff.</p>		 <p>04 SONIC GENERATIONS Is Sonic Generations the best Sonic game since the days of MegaDrive?</p>	
<p>05</p>		<p>07 GREEN HORNET, PRIEST & RESIDENT EVIL: AFTERLIFE in one pack? In 3D? Not sure if want.</p>	<p>08</p>	<p>09</p>	<p>10</p> 	<p>11 SKYRIM is out! Make sure you book three months off work/school/life.</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14 RESISTANCE 3 No, it's not out now. But we are playing it online today! Check out Twitter to play with us (@PlayMag_UK)</p>		<p>16</p>		
<p>19</p>		<p>21 CARS 2 sees Pixar continue the only series it gets wrong but at least it looks pretty. Hurray?</p>	<p>23</p> 	<p>24 PLAY 212 All-singing, all-dancing issue of Play! That won't sing. Or dance. Well, a bit.</p>	<p>25 ULTIMATE MARVEL VS CAPCOM 3 & WWE '12 Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3 and WWE '12 spearhead this Friday.</p>	
<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>				

PSN HEAT BAR!

FREEZING: GOTHAM CITY IMPOSTORS

Average people dressing up as superheroes with superhuman abilities? Right. Yes. Downloadable arena FPSs are becoming trendy and this is the latest example but it seems like an odd use of the DC licence.

COLD: LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW

We're excited because it's everything we love that's morally wrong – pigtails, chainsaws, an unhealthy love for Suda51 – wrapped up in a downloadable title. But the combat looks bleh, or would do if such a word existed. We really want this to be good.

WARM: IBB AND OBB

Simplicity is key for this co-op 2D platformer, which only uses one button – for jump. With the gravity puzzles and need to jump on your partner's head, why further complicate things? Not many have heard of this yet but trust us, this is a little gem waiting to break out.

HOT: JOE DANGER: THE MOVIE

'Joe Ginger', as our mates on **NowGamer** call it by mistake, is as close to a guaranteed hit as you can get. Hello Games is focusing on what made the first game so special with more vehicles, tricks, tracks and insanity.



DEVELOPERS: STOP RUINING YOUR GAMES WITH RIDICULOUS HANDHOLDING

We know how to skip cut-scenes, thanks. We don't need to be told



THE MODERN GAMER is an entitled bastard, that's for sure. That obviously includes us, before you think we're going to lay down some 'in our day, games were made out of vicious snakes' sort of bull on you. All we're saying is that gamers these days have never been more comfortable. Too comfortable, if certain games are to be believed in their attitude that all gamers have regressed to the mental level of infant sloths.

Granted, given the fact that playing any popular online shooter these days is tantamount to hearing every schoolyard argument ever uttered piped into your brain at once, developers might actually believe that this has come to pass. We'll leave that for another time, however, for we speak about the increasingly more prevalent attitude of developers plastering 'PRESS (WHATEVER) TO SKIP' all over those lovely cut-scenes that must have taken an age to create.

Homefront did it, infuriating us and making every member of the team want America to be invaded so that this nonsense would never happen again. Why spend so much time building a narrative, shooting live-action sequences with actors who look just enough like their real-life counterparts for you to say 'hey, what's Hilary Clinton doing in *Homefront*?' and then slap a big, distracting message over the top? Madness.

Then *Crysis 2* did it, but that didn't matter too much as *Crysis 2*'s story was about as engaging as getting hit in the head with a shovel, which coincidentally was pretty much what must have happened to the invading enemies given their AI. Now *Dead Island*, Techland's breakout hit, is letting us know that 'hey, if you can't be bothered to listen to all this fluff we spent years of our lives preparing, then you don't have to. It's fine. Go on, skip it. Skip it. SKIP IT NOW!'

All feature cut-scenes ruined by the developer by 'helpfully' adding that text over the images. It's like the 'red button' option on TV. Irritating and once you've seen it, hovering around there at the bottom of the image, you can't un-see it.

Granted, it might seem minor. Maybe it is. Maybe we've turned into cranky, 'get off our lawn' gamers in our old age. Maybe we're pointing our rage cannon at the wrong target: maybe the platform holders are behind this? We're not sure. Either way we want it gone. We know how to skip cut-scenes, fools. Now let us enjoy your fine scare-mongering narratives about zombies, aliens and invasions.



twitterwatch



@DavidSeymour
"Driver: San Francisco looks amazing & plays well. Skipped 1st NIS; any idea why I'm a psychic-flying body-hopping street racing helper ghost?"

@PlayMag_UK says: *Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City* dev David Seymour pays *Driver: SF* tribute. Well. Sort of.

DEAD ISLAND

Dead Island is a game that assumes we have the capacity to become a tank-like zombie-slaying machine, but that we can't skip cut-scenes?

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INSTALL

5 MINI-GAMES

Generally speaking mini-games are to be seen as distractions from the main course, to make sure you don't get bored of yet more man-shoot bang bang, and as such aren't held to very high standards. Some, however, are excellent, like these beauties...

1 RESIDENT EVIL 4/5: THE MERCENARIES

Mercs is almost as good as *Resident Evil 4*. That should be all you need to know. A score attack game with a constantly ticking clock and a hungry combo counter, this is so much better than full-price dirge like *Bodycount* that it's embarrassing.



2 ISS SERIES: SCENARIO MODE

Taking the best of *International Superstar Soccer* (the precursor to *PES* for those born ten minutes ago) and cramming it into bite-sized, challenge-based packages, Scenario mode was awesome. Generally pitting you as having to overcome a massive obstacle (come back from 2-0 down in the last ten minutes, having to score from a corner to continue the game) these were awesome.



5 TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT: TEKKEN BOWL

Whichever genius sat down and decided that the thing that *Tekken* needed to become the best fighting game of all time was a bowling mini-game needs to be a) examined by a mental health professional and b) given a medal.

TEAM PICKS

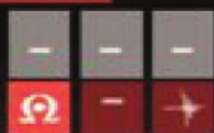
Plus four more top mini-games from the **Play** team

3 ASSASSIN'S CREED SERIES: GLYPHS

Using logic, reasoning (and probably an FAQ) to solve the glyph puzzles was a nice change of pace from stabbing people in the neck, and massively satisfying if you solved the harder ones without the aid of a guide or responsible adult.

71645
15124
10152
31754
72114
32120
01545
72069
81492
23414
65119
61902
23118
14523

ENTER PASSWORD



R2 ALIGN CODE WHEEL
X SUBMIT



4 STREET FIGHTER III: 3RD STRIKE: PARRYING THE BASKETBALL

Introducing the new parrying mechanic (where players could bat away enemy attacks if they had enough skill) nicely, the basketball mini-game is just as memorable as the game itself.



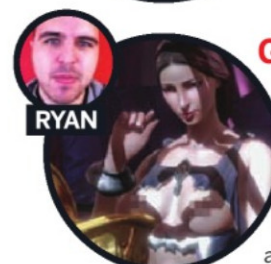
KANE & LYNCH
HAHAHAHA
HAHAHAHA BECAUSE IT'S SO SHORT SEE!
Only joking, I actually like this game. I might be the only one, though.



CARAVAN
This mini-game from *Fallout: NV* may seem complicated at first but can be easily won every time once you have a deck loaded with 10s, 9s and 7s.



BURNOUT CRASH
No no no, not *Burnout Crash* – Crash mode FROM *Burnout*. It's brilliant and distracting and wonderful and smashy.



GOD OF WAR SEX GAME
I can't endorse this without sounding like a perv. Look, I was put on the spot, asked for a favourite mini-game and this was my answer, alright? Don't judge me.

The anatomy of... GENERIC ARMY MAN!

He's the only person that you can rely on to make sure that good ol' Uncle Sam is still standing tomorrow morning, and that you're in no danger of your outlook being influenced by those sneaky communists and pacifists. Because if there's one thing that Generic Army Man hates, it's weakness. And reload times

GUNISHMENT

Generic Army Man knows only one thing: war. Just like in the cult classic live-action bullying manual/movie *Full Metal Jacket*, Generic Army Man has been trained to live and die by his firearm. As such you'll always see him clutching one like a mother with a newborn baby, maybe out of sadness because Generic Army Man is banned from wielding an actual baby as a weapon by pesky 'laws'. Because we all know how those things kill the will to live in anything they meet.

AMERICA THE BRAVE

Generic Army Man is as American as apple pie and wars for oil, so there's no way he's going to be hiding his affiliation. Proudly emblazoned everywhere about his being, Generic Army Man would make his entire outfit out of Old Glory if he were allowed but alas he is not. Fun Fact: the American flag appears to be the wrong way around when attached to a soldier's right sleeve because it is meant to represent the flag being carried forward into battle. Now you know, and remember kids, knowing is half the battle.

SHOW ME YOUR WAR FACE

Generic Army Man has only one facial expression: developer apathy. He doesn't care what's in front of him, he just knows that if he dares show any humanity outside of sheer contempt then no one will buy his game.

For the people that fight in Generic Army Man's digital wars need not humour, nor innovation or even fun. They need the sight of thousands of identical foreigners getting killed to shit by Generic Army Man and his buddies, and they don't care how he does it as long as he doesn't dare crack a smile.

HELMET CAM

Generic Army Man is a sartorial king. When he's not wearing exactly the same outfit as everyone else, he's accessorising like a boss. Here he is wearing the same helmet as every other soldier in every other war game ever, because he doesn't want to confuse people who buy these games. If, for example, players could see a character's eyes or the top of their heads, what sort of man would they assume he was? A real person? With character and depth? Just who do you think you are, son?



BATTLEFIELD 3

EA's war shooter is out now for those of you who want to play as Generic Army Man shooting at other Generic Army Men

LOOKIN' GOOD

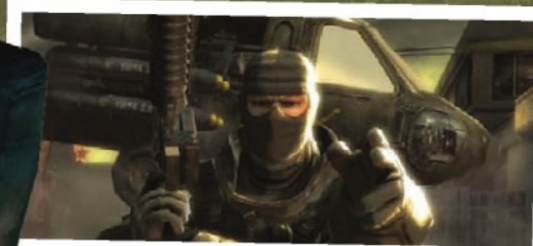
Like all popular trends, Generic Army Man's popularity has seen his look copied mercilessly by imitators. Here are some of the most visually striking adaptations of his look, and how successful they were



NEW TWIST: Beards/cash-in
SUCCESS RATING: Middling



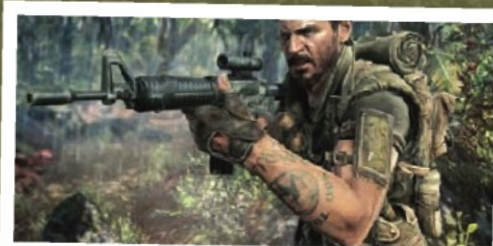
NEW TWIST: Blindfolds
SUCCESS RATING: Meh



NEW TWIST: Balaclava/aliens
SUCCESS RATING: Low



NEW TWIST: Fire/huge marketing campaign
SUCCESS RATING: Massive



NEW TWIST: Inexplicable tattoos depicting affiliation with top-secret black ops/nonsense 'story'
SUCCESS RATING: Monstrous

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PSVITA: COULD IT BE 'ALL THAT'?

I've been fortunate enough to go hands-on with PS Vita a few times now over the last six months or so. As such, I'm willing to put myself in a position as 'low-level expert,' like Jamie Redknapp and John Hartson. Except with a handheld gaming machine, not with football. Oh, and I use less clichés than both of them.

Anyway, my time with PlayStation Vita has been peppered with moments of pleasant surprise. Nothing's blown me away since my first sitting with *Sound Shapes* (wherein I remarked to the Sony chap demoing the game, without thinking,

"this is fucking brilliant!", mainly because it is) and the tech on show isn't anything new – we've seen these elements in pretty much every other device ever made anywhere ever.

But so what? Does it really have to be completely new to impress? I still maintain Vita contains All The Technology and it looks like it's being used in an intelligent way, avoiding as much in the way of gimmicks as possible. Yes, the sniper rifle aiming on *Uncharted: Golden Abyss* is a bit shit, but you don't have to use it.

No, this seems to be a very clear-cut case of Sony actually learning

from past mistakes – at least in part – and making something that appeals to gamers, something that isn't just jumping on bandwagons and something that will offer something for everyone. Maybe. However, it might just be my... sigh... 'hardcore' nature shining through here and clouding my judgement, but I think the Vita is a bloody snazzy piece of kit.

It's lighter than it looks, too.

Anyway, enough of the PlayStation Vita love-in. Normal, negative service will be re-established soon. And the memory cards are still insanely priced.

Battlefield 3 is on two discs on 360. THE CONSOLE WAR IS OVER! LOLZ!1!!!!

Let's all have a good laugh at the Xbox 360 fanboys. What are they going to do now? They're not going to actually have to change discs are they? What decade is this? The Nineties?

Will they be wearing wrap-around sunglasses while they do it?

Watching *ER* in-between multiplayer games?

Playing with their Val Kilmer Batman action figures while choosing classes?

Listening to The Stone Roses for the duration?

According to EA (via Eurogamer) single-player will be on one disc and multiplayer, co-op and mysterious 'HD installation content' on the other.

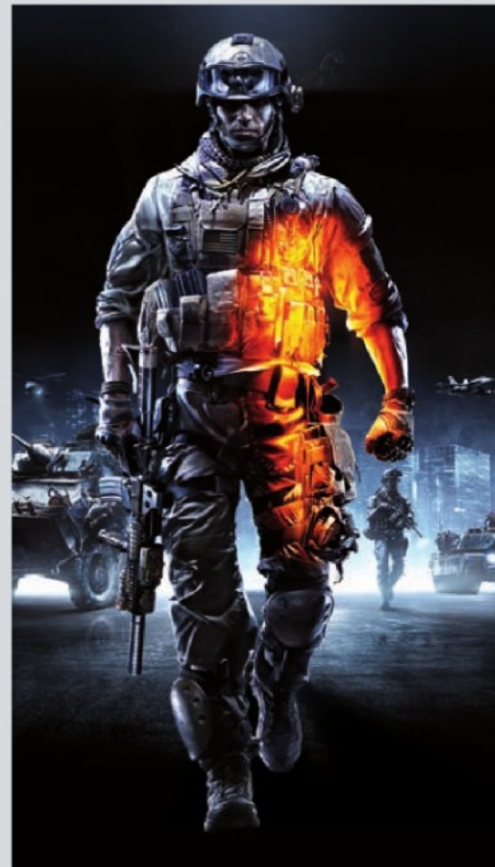
On PlayStation 3? ALL ON ONE DISC BABY, JUST LIKE KRAZY KEN ALWAYS WANTED IT, YEE-HAW!

Obviously this proves, once and for all, that the PlayStation 3 is the superior gaming machine, because we'll be able to simply play everything without getting up from our chairs/sofas/floors/whatevers, which means only one thing: Microsoft is doomed.

If you have shares in the company, you better sell them now. Because Microsoft can come back from lawsuits. It can come back from the Red Ring of Death fiasco. It can come back from Kinect. But two discs for *Battlefield 3*? That's a bridge too far.

PLEASE NOTE: This is sarcasm to reflect the OVERBLOWN NATURE of the internet.

We are not fanboys. As you were.



RE:PLAY

Listen, it's really very simple: you write words, you get games. Has anything ever been that simple? Maybe our former games editor Chris, actually

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Play magazine, defenders of virtue and justice!



Dear Play,

As an avid follower of your fine publication since its inception, it goes without saying that I sometimes enjoy taking a nostalgic trip through the bygone age of issues past; comparing and contrasting the industry as it was to as it is today, and seeing the behemoth of PlayStation rise further through the echelons of videogame adoration. It's one that has indeed been an enjoyable journey, and I can only hope that the advent of videogame news sites and PDFs doesn't quell the demand for a physical PlayStation magazine such as you.

Having read issue 208 and appreciated your articles on the original *WipEout* artists and *Duke Nukem Forever* developers, it struck me with an idea for the possibility of a new segment in future issues: given that many of the games that have become synonymous with the PlayStation brand have had various development shifts and drop-outs it could be interesting to interview now-defunct developers and original teams of famous games to get their opinions on the process of game making, their input and the development of their respective games, as well as their opinions on the industry as it is now. There are a bunch of devs, individuals and teams to sieve through so I think it's a fairly feasible idea, and it could give us a new entertaining angle on some of the games we hold in high regard.

I'd be interested to hear your opinion on this suggestion as well as other gamers, who share



a view on it. Keep up the fine work and here's to many more years of Play!

Regards,

Barra

Barra, you obviously read our minds (or our magazine, at least), because here at Play we have one mission: to dig around in the festering scum-hive that is videogames and bring you the truth.

In all seriousness, though, we're going to scale up our efforts to bring you the inside track on games both current and past, including talking to developers and former employees to find out what really went on behind closed doors. It's like Watergate, but slightly more serious.

No pressure, eh?

Dear Play,

So many great games are coming out at the end of this year but like most people I will not be able to get all of them. *Battlefield 3*, *MW3*, *Skyrim*, *FIFA 12*, *Resistance 3*, *Dead Island* and *F1 2011* are all games that I would love to own. There are probably some I have missed off, too. I have already pre-ordered *F1 2011* but I am not so sure which of the remaining games I should buy. I am sure many others feel this way, too.

So in the decision of which to buy I shall be turning to you, trusty Play reviewers, to guide me through with your accurate ratings. I will be looking forward to reading your reviews on these games and if, say, *Dead Island* doesn't impress you then it won't be added to my 50-plus collection of PS3 games.

So Play, my decision of what games to buy is all down to you.

Thanks for reading.

Neil Vincent

We'll do our best, Neil, and we have to agree with you regarding the massive avalanche of games that is heading our way this year? Don't publishers know we're in a recession? That not everyone can be as fabulously wealthy as the handsome billionaires of Play? No, they do not. Still, take solace in a free game to take your mind off it.

Wouldn't we all, eh?

Dear Play,

I would love to hear more information about PlayStation 4 in every issue.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Carlton Reid



The stuff we want to hear about!

1

Battlefield 3: did it live up to the hype?

2

Did anyone buy *Dark Souls*? If not, why not?

3

Has *FIFA* changed enough?



It'd be a shame if not everyone got to play this.



Write in, and win! Every full-length letter we print receives a free game, courtesy of THQ. For each letter we included this month, the sender wins a copy of Space Marine, which is out now on PS3 (£49.99).

PLAY

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ABC
21,735
Jan-Dec 2010



Is this PS4? No.



Don't drink and drive, even virtually.

WHOA WHOAH WHOAH, WHY DIDN'T WE THINK OF THIS?! Only joking Carlton, we love your straight-talking nature, and you'll be pleased to know that page 32 of this very magazine has a whacking great PS4 feature in it. Good, eh?

Remember kids: alcohol is *not* the answer

Dear Play,
Last night I came back from the pub too buzzed to sleep and so turned to my trusty PS3. I discovered a glorious truth: alcohol improves your gaming skills.

While playing COD I was, to use the technical term, 'headshotting like a mother*****'. Split/Second became my bitch because my drunken brain decided brakes were only for bicycles and tea. I would've been king of Bomberman, too, if there was anyone online to obliterate.

I'm going to pass on my findings to the scientific world: alcohol + PS3 = supreme mightiness.

Gordon Mclean, Scotland

Ah Gordon, you're fast becoming a favourite around these parts with your stories of nudity (Play 210) and now alcohol-fuelled videogaming. As for your scientific theory, strenuous testing has proved to us that different people are affected in different ways. Certain members of the Play team, for example, suffer from what we've now termed 'Selective Rock Band Alcohol Aptitude', where the ridiculous situation arises when

you can play the drums really well after a few drinks but not the guitar. Mental.

Either way, we'd probably have to come down on the side of *not* drinking before doing anything, because it's well bad for you.

Benefits of a classical education

Dear everyone at Play,
I just wanted to say what a great magazine you publish! I buy Play all the time; it's the only magazine I buy, even as a girl!

I love reading all the latest reviews on all the games, especially Call Of Duty which I'm addicted to!

I suffer from a lot of illnesses, so rarely go out. Play magazine and my PS3 keep me occupied, especially online with

Black Ops. Lads hate a girl whooping their arses on games, but then again my older brothers brought me up on Doom! Keep up the excellent magazine.

With kindest regards,
Nicola Chadwick

Ah, Doom. We remember playing it on our trusty 486's when this were all fields and none of you people were even alive. Sadly those days are gone, but we're glad that your classical training is enabling you to kick ass at Black Ops online.

As for your implied assertion that Play is quite possibly the greatest magazine of all time, yes, you are correct. Have a free game, and keep whooping ass on Black Ops.

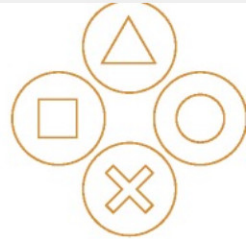


Here it is, kids: the daddy of them all.

THE SHOCKING SECRETS BEHIND THE ORIGINAL TOMB RAIDER

On the 15th anniversary of Lara Croft's first Tomb Raider outing, David Crookes finds out about Lara Cruz, the 'real' Lara and Fembo...





“Bigger than Pammy, wiser than Yoda,” screamed the cover of influential British magazine *The Face*. And there she was. A girl who had crossed the divide from the geek world of gaming to the chic land of style. Ponytailed hair pulled back, wearing tight skimpy shorts and a turquoise T-shirt, she showed off the slanted brown eyes and luscious lips which fashion guru Miranda Sawyer had so gushingly referenced, lending human qualities to gaming’s first digital ‘It Girl’.

For this gun-toting, adventurous young woman was Lara Croft, she of the Lucozade adverts and the cameo of U2’s Popmart tour; the star who went on to be characterised in two films, a million and one lunchboxes and even a novel by author Douglas Coupland. An intelligent gal with a cut-glass accent who found fame in 1996 when the jaw-dropping 3D exploration puzzle action-adventure game *Tomb Raider* made its debut, itself a masterstroke that belied the trend of using men as the protagonist. “There are a thousand Rambo clones bouncing around and that’s no big deal,” Coupland said later. “But suddenly there’s a Fembo, and it’s front page news.”

Back in 1995, when the concept of Lara was still on the drawing board, no one quite knew how well received the game would be. The team which worked on the debut understood the ambition of *Tomb Raider*’s designer Toby Gard but achieving those high hopes was far from an easy task. “Everything we were doing was uncharted, not least because none of us had ever done anything like it before,” recalls programmer Gavin Rummery. “On my first day, Toby outlined the game to me and explained his vision of a camera sweeping around the game world giving the best view of the action at all times like a movie. I sat there thinking, ‘Bloody hell, how’s that going to work then?’ Six months later I was still thinking the same thing, but it had become my responsibility to try to figure it out.”

Initially the main character was going to be a man but Jeremy Smith, who founded *Tomb Raider*’s developer Core Design, feared that it would be so close to *Indiana Jones* that a lawsuit would head its way from LucasArts. It was time to change. “Legend had it that Toby had met a rather smart posh girl at some party and fallen in love with her,” says Eidos’s then-director Dominic Wheatley. “He thought she was marvellous, very cool and smart, so he invented this female character based on her.”

Thus Lara Cruz was born, her surname later changed to Croft as the developers believed it would be less American, more upper-class English. With that came an entire back story about how she was born in Wimbledon, attended Gordonstoun boarding school and a Swiss Finishing School,

and had suffered a plane crash in the Himalayas which had caused her to rethink her life. That was usually glossed over by players more intent on discovering personal details like 34D-24-35 and certainly by the time work started on the game, Lara was very much all-woman.

“The argument that Toby had used in favour of having a female lead was that it was a third-person game, so men would prefer to look at a woman, while women would enjoy playing a woman for once as few games at the time had a female lead,” says Rummery.

At the time, the PlayStation was heralding a new era of 3D and developers were keen to explore this fresh technology. But the difficulty of it meant they muddled through, implementing things in whichever way they could, never thinking that what they were doing would turn out to be so unique. Some things came together by accident.

“The ‘grid’ world came out of the fact that we couldn’t figure out how to handle interaction with arbitrarily complex 3D environments or even build them in the wireframe art packages that existed at the time,” says Rummery. “This turned out to be critical to the entire gameplay, spawning the Room Editor that I made to build the environments (and which allowed the artists to build, experiment and adjust the world very quickly) and the set of moves that Lara was equipped with for navigating the ‘grid.’”

The team was talented yet inexperienced. Rummery was straight out of university. Graphic artist Neal Boyd and lead programmer Paul Douglas had never worked on a released game and Gard had only worked on one, the terrible *BC Racers*. The only experienced game developers were Heather Gibson and Jason Gosling and neither had worked on a 3D game before. So they experimented.

“The first Lara Croft model had sunglasses like she wears in the first FMV but it just made her look like she had two black eyes in the game, so that was changed,” remembers Rummery. “She also had a ponytail, but us coders didn’t know how to do that in-game, so it became a bun. It was only on the sequel that I had a brainwave how to do it simply and was able to get it working after a little bit of experimentation.” >

TOMB RAIDER



☛ A host of sequels followed the original *Tomb Raider*'s 1996 release, with the latest game in the series due in 2012.



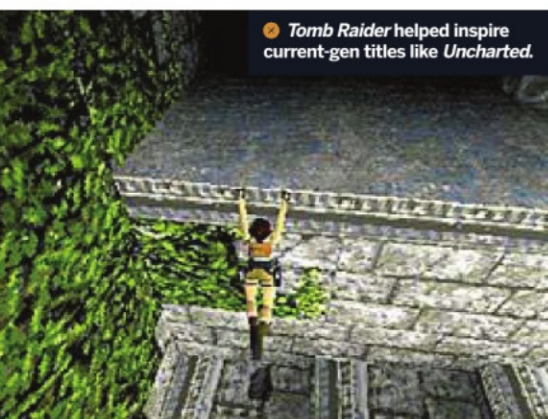
☛ Lara has gone on to star in movies, adverts, a book and even had a cameo in U2's Popmart tour.



SERIES HIGHLIGHT

THE APPEARANCE OF T-REX

On Level 3 in the Lost Valley of *Tomb Raider*, the floor shook. In came T-Rex charging like mad. Run or shoot? Either way, it was cack your pants time. Gavin Rummery recalls: "When I first arrived, Toby Gard had built four models: Lara, a wolf, a bear and a T-Rex. There was no reason for the T-Rex – it wasn't in any version of the script, and didn't fit Toby's level ideas. But it was cool, and so the rest of us persuaded Toby that we should incorporate it into one of the levels somehow. The result was the iconic T-Rex moment, which I guess works so well because it is so unexpected."



☛ *Tomb Raider* helped inspire current-gen titles like *Uncharted*.

> "And originally the Room Editor supported 45-degree-angled walls, which made the environments look less blocky. But this got abandoned fairly early on because it was hard enough trying to get Lara to interact with the 90-degree walls without adding extra complexity."

With the entire first game having been put together using a core of three artists and three programmers and design being something they did as they went along, others pitched in with FMV, sound, music, code and art. Gibson and Boyd designed, built and textured their levels including all the puzzles, while Gard built and animated all of the characters and traps as well as helping write the script. Douglas, Gosling and Rummery had to build the entire game engine and all the tools.

"There was no specialisation," says Rummery. "I wrote the Room Editor tool, coded AI and character animation and developed the 3D camera. The camera was by far my biggest headache as at the time I had no other games for reference and I was never really happy with it. And there were lots of heated debates. The way I remember it, Toby, Paul and I seemed to spend almost every day arguing over some detail or another – we had a lot of passion for what we were doing, and were all young and very opinionated! But they were constructive and led to a strong consensus on the direction we took."

Despite all this hard work, Eidos was unsure of the project at first. Certainly, Wheatley confesses to feeling a little dubious. "It was called *Tomb Raider*," he laughs at the memory. "That, to me, was like *Raiders Of The*

“Right, I want Tomb Raider this and I want Tomb Raider that, and I want to get more bloody posters up here, and I want to take that off and put Tomb Raider there”

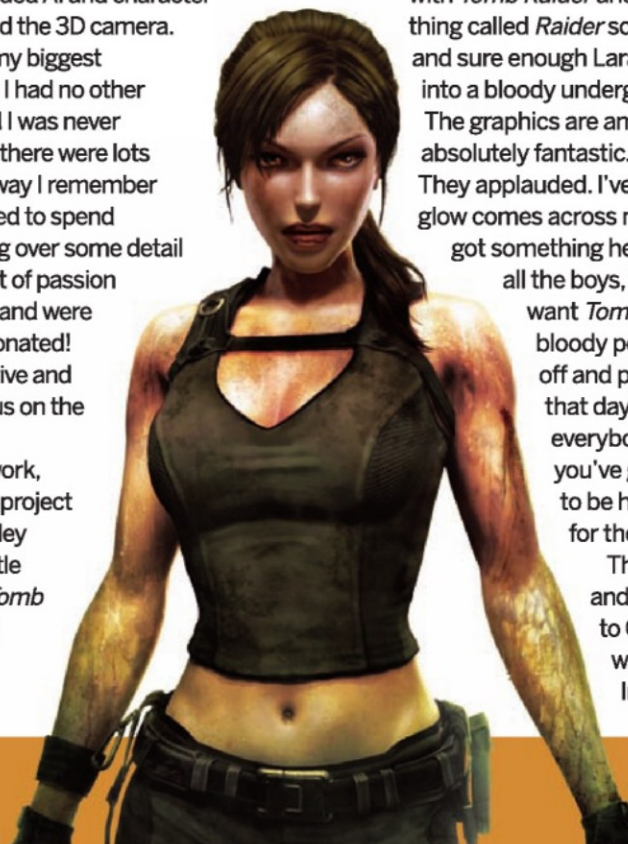
*Lost f***ing Ark*. I mean this looked to me like a knock-off of *Indiana Jones* and I'm like, 'nah'. But anyway, sure enough, I'm at E3, around May 1996, and I'm doing a sales presentation to our sales reps, all these grisly old reps from New York who took your products into Walmart and Toys R Us. They were a real gloomy bunch of bastards.

"I'm doing my presentation with the videos and all the stuff. And anyway this video has just arrived from England with *Tomb Raider* and I'm like, 'Oh yeah, we've got this thing called *Raider* something.' Anyway, I put on the video and sure enough Lara comes up, winks, jumps away, dives into a bloody underground pool and it looks amazing.

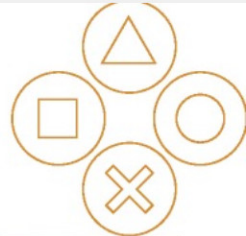
The graphics are amazing, the characterisation was absolutely fantastic. It also struck home straightaway. They applauded. I've never had that before, so this warm glow comes across my chest and I'm like, 'Holy crap, we've got something here.' So I go onto the floor and say to

all the boys, 'Right, I want *Tomb Raider* this and I want *Tomb Raider* that, and I want to get more bloody posters up here, and I want to take that off and put *Tomb Raider* there.' By the end of that day, we had everybody up our ass. I mean everybody was coming up to me saying, 'God, you've got a monster. It's fantastic. It's going to be huge.' We had Sony and Sega fighting for the exclusive rights. It was insane."

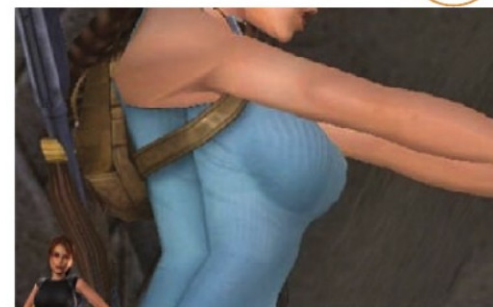
The game spawned an inevitable sequel and fresh talent was being attracted to Core Design. Christian Russell was working in Sheffield at Gremlin Interactive but went for a job at Core.



THE SHOCKING SECRETS BEHIND THE ORIGINAL



✖ The third-person perspective meant women could enjoy playing as a female character while men could enjoy the... view.



SERIES HIGHLIGHT

LARA'S BREASTS

Sure, in *Tomb Raider II* Ms Croft could now climb and the level design reflected her new-found skill. But forget that. The rumour of Lara's breasts getting bigger because of the slip of a mouse is true, says Richard Morton, who produced graphics for the second game, working with lead animator Stuart Atkinson. "Stuart animated and enhanced Lara for *Tomb Raider II* and he was working on adding detail when he selected all verts in Lara's breasts and pressed scale instead of move. Jeremy saw it and said leave it... so we gave Lara a boob job. We actually made her breasts bigger with every sequel."

✖ She began life as Lara Cruz but developers deemed this too American...



✖ ...so her name was changed to Croft, which was seen as more upper-class English.



✖ Core Design was concerned about *Tomb Raider* being too similar to *Indiana Jones* so opted for a female lead character.

"During the whole interview it was made very clear just how successful *Tomb Raider* had been. My mind was made up, so having handed in my notice at Gremlin, I was a member of the *Tomb Raider* team a month later. I worked on *Tomb Raider II*, primarily helping out Pete Barnard, the other artist, on producing the cut-scene intros for the second game."

In the sequel, the ponytail was resurrected and the game engine was vastly overhauled to speed it up and allow more complex environments. The lighting system was also improved, with dynamic lights added for the flares and other choice objects in the world. The developers knew they had to make Lara look better, so she was given more polygons. There was also a more involved storyline and more cut-scenes and video sequences to push the story through the game. There was a much shorter development cycle for *Tomb Raider II*, but they had to deliver more than the first.

With such a huge game, came massive responsibility. Stuart Atkinson had produced additional graphics towards the end of the first game and he was keen to see Lara in different outfits and have new moves. "The greatest challenge for me was to create new animations that were

up to the original standard and to seamlessly blend in with the original style. I knew every little new addition I made was going to be under huge scrutiny," he said.

The team felt that the press and gaming public were poised to tear *Tomb Raider II* apart. The amount of hype and media exposure generated from the first game started to feel intimidating. By this time, Gard had left the company. Everyone was wondering if Core could manage it without him. And yet *Tomb Raider II* became the fastest-selling game of all time with many saying it was better than the first.

"That was a massive standout moment for me," says Atkinson. "I worked extremely hard, had no life for one year, but I was extremely proud of the result. Then again, I'm surprised any games were ever made considering the amount of time we all spent down the pub. Always coming in hungover, barely able to focus on the screen in front of you. But I suppose we were so young we could handle it. But I believe it was the freedom given to us by our boss Jeremy Smith and how much he tolerated our drunken partying behaviour that allowed the creativity to flow, which resulted in one of the biggest games ever to grace our screens." ➤

Mr Tomb Raider



Karl Stewart, global brand director for Tomb Raider, has the final say on Lara's life. As her significant other, he fills us in on all aspects of the series including the reboot...

Why reboot the series with *Tomb Raider*?

The decision to re-imagine, or 'Reboot', the *Tomb Raider* franchise came about for a number of reasons, to be honest. As you know Crystal began managing the *Tomb Raider* franchise about eight years ago, picking up the mantle from Core Designs. When the responsibility for the franchise changed hands we quickly jumped in and began making games built on the original canon, and although we're extremely proud of the four great games we developed we always had the vision and passion to go back and tell a new and immersive story that would re-establish Lara, making her culturally relevant to today's gaming audience. Our goal right now is to take this unique opportunity in a franchise's history to go back to the beginning and tell a visceral and immersive story that sets the foundation for the future success of the brand.

Did any feedback on *Tomb Raider*:

Underworld spur the *Tomb Raider* reboot?

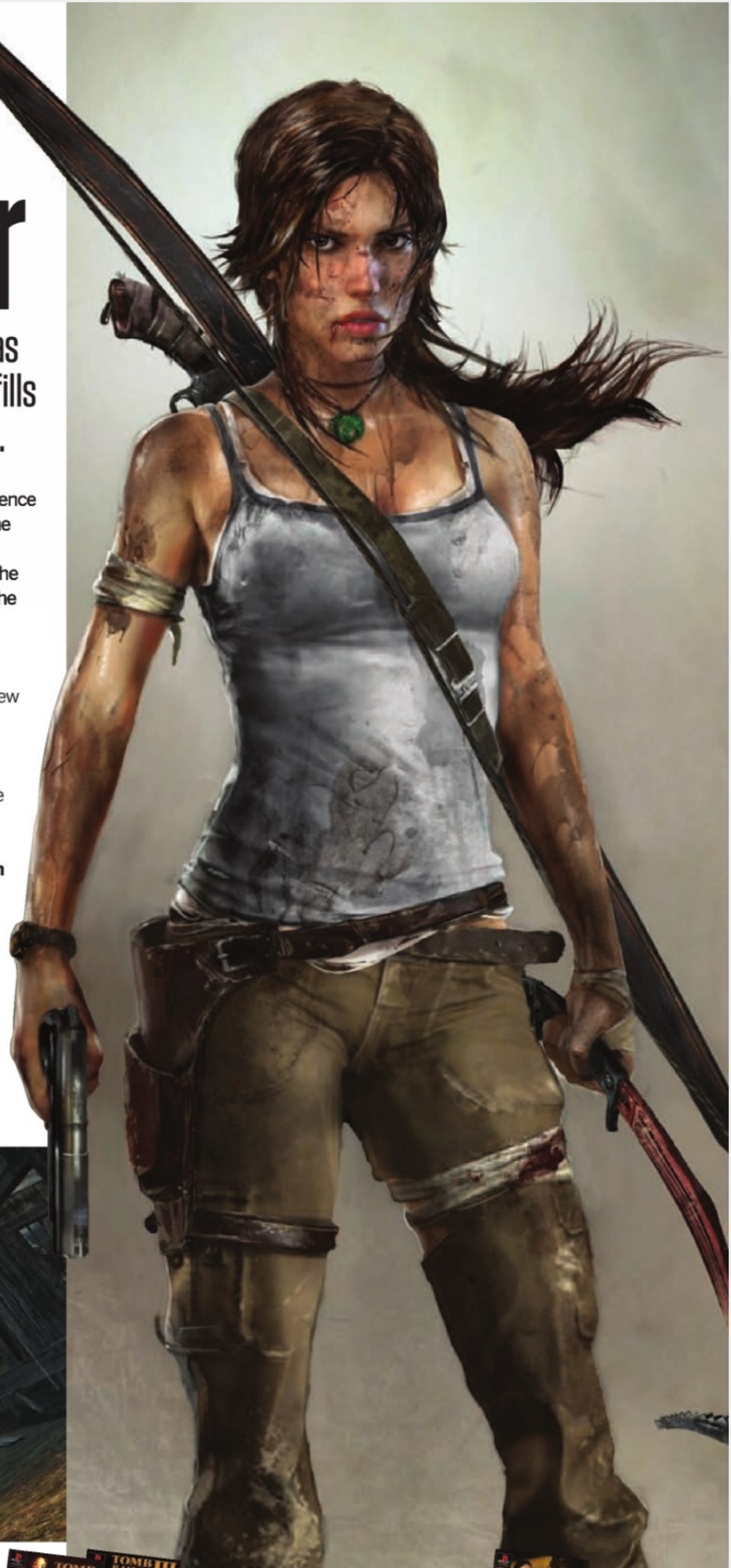
As mentioned, we're proud of what we achieved so far with all of the *Tomb Raider* titles we've created at Crystal. While we were developing *Underworld* we had already made the decision to

go down this path of re-imagining the experience of *Tomb Raider*. So the decision to re-imagine the franchise wasn't as a direct result of just *Underworld*, it was a result of us feeling like the older vision for Lara had run its course and the experience of what 'Tomb Raiding' stood for needed to be revisited.

With regards to any feedback from *Underworld* making an impression on this new vision, there were a few that stood out that spurned some drastic changes to this new vision, such as the issues we had with the camera and fact that the combat experience had become dated.

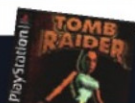
In rebooting the series, what did the team recognise as the key elements of the series to preserve and build upon for *Tomb Raider*?

Tomb Raider's been around for a long time, 15 years to be exact, and during that time it's been one of the most successful titles in gaming history. As a studio, we understood from the outset that you don't just get to that position without having a formula or an experience that gamers understand



🔥 *Tomb Raider* will chart Lara's evolution as a fearless explorer.

Tomb Raider



PSN Price: £4.79

It was 1996 and Lara Croft entered stage right, double-crossed and eager to explore as any good cyber heroine should. With 15 absolutely huge chapters to get through and a host of far-flung places from Atlantis to Rome, the claustrophobic chambers were richly lavish, the presentation cinematic. It became a PlayStation classic almost instantly. "*Tomb Raider* has been an incredible success, far beyond anything we'd hoped for. They have been very exciting times," Eidos life president Ian Livingstone told us.

Tomb Raider II & III



PSN Price: £4.79 each

With *Tomb Raider II*'s release, the graphics saw a huge leap forward while the formula nudged Lara out of caves and against human adversaries in Venice, Tibet and the like, keeping things fresh. *Tomb Raider III* didn't give gamers that 'seen it all before' feel, with enough visual treats to wash over the most cynical of eyes. While some levels were below par – the first time a sense of tiredness began to show in the franchise – there were nevertheless many sparks of genius which carried it to the finish line.

The Last Revelation

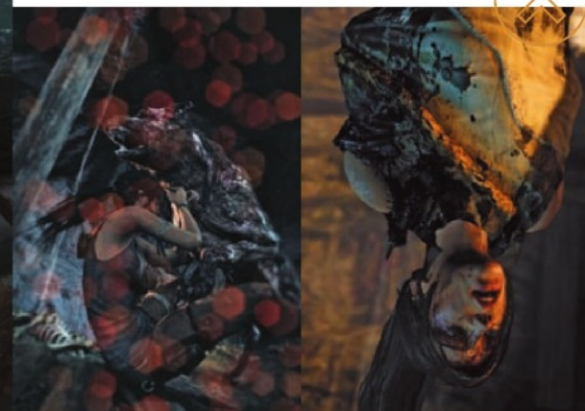


PSN Price: £4.79

And so it fell. The *Tomb Raider* series began to falter on the fourth pass as laziness crept in and took a hold of Lara. She had lived on her wits in the first three games, now she was merely going through the motions in a game that was slower paced and had lost much of its panache. Money was ruling the day at this point – a game a year; a chance to milk the Christmas audience. But it was to be the game that caused Lara's popularity to dip as gamers soon caught wind of what was happening.



✕ The earlier levels are tinged with survival-horror elements.



✕ The reboot will show Lara as vulnerable, for the first time.

“ We have no intention of going back to the older version of Lara Croft ”

and enjoy playing. So when we went back to the drawing board for this new vision we made sure not to eliminate certain factors that made the *Tomb Raider* franchise so successful in the past. Experiences such as exploration, puzzle solving and combat are pillars of the franchise, they make *Tomb Raider* what it is. So going forward these pillars will remain as the backbone for our vision, but with that said, they will have a unique twist to each of them, making them more relevant to the story for today's audience.

Unusual question but has any of the team gone back to the original games and played them again, to see what worked and what didn't? Or does new *Tomb Raider* draw a line under those games?

[Laughs] Of course, we always dip back in and play the old versions, especially *Tomb Raider 1*. We do this not necessarily to look at feature sets or story but more to rekindle the excitement and spirit that the old games had when they were first released. Each time you play them you have to remember that controlling a character in a fully 3D environment, while solving puzzles and travelling the globe was unheard of 15 years ago, it made the hairs stand up on the back of your neck and gave you goosebumps. In a lot of ways that's what we're trying to do with this vision, too.

***Tomb Raider* is the first game in the series to receive a Mature 17+ rating in the US and will presumably have a similar age rating here in the UK. How big a decision was this?**

The decision to bring *Tomb Raider* into an M-rated space was a big one. We spent weeks, if not months, debating the decision and the

consequences both for and against, looking at effects it would have on areas such as audience, experience and even business areas such as advertising. In the end the decision all boiled down to the story we wanted to present to the audience. Our long-term goal is to push Lara Croft to the very limits of human endurance in order to build the foundation needed for a strong and believable character. We realised that we could not do that in a 'T' space, it needed to be 'M'. Every moment you experience in the game needs to feel real and in your face, you cannot pussyfoot around what it takes to survive, you need to show the harsh realities and consequences to your actions as a player.

***Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light* was an interesting project and critically, it was a big success. How did it fare commercially for Square Enix? Will its success lead to more original Lara Croft PSN titles?**

I can't go into details of the financials of *Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light* as we don't normally disclose sales data on our digital platforms, but it was successful on many levels for us. We learned a lot from *Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light* and you'll just have to wait and see what we have in store for the future. We've already announced that we're working on a new IP, so keep your eyes on Crystal in 2012.

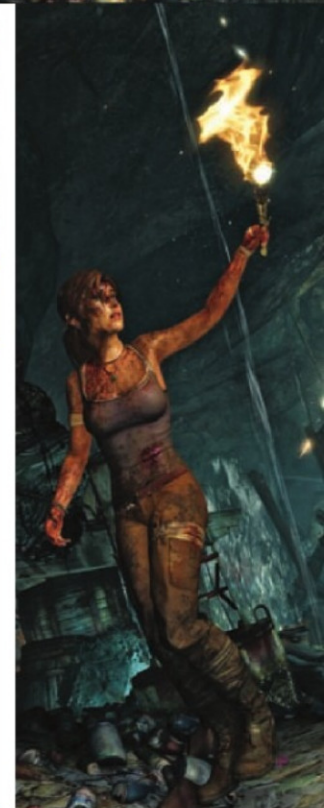
Finally, you've said previously that by the time you finish the game, you'll recognise Lara Croft. Where does the series go once it's re-established Lara's character without overlapping with the fearless Lara of previous *Tomb Raider* games?

[Laughs] With regards to the future you're just going to have to wait and see what we have planned for the franchise after this game, let's get this one on the shelf first. What I can say now, though, is that we have no intention of going back to the older version of Lara Croft.



SERIES HIGHLIGHT THE LAST REVELATION

Okay, so less a highlight, more a lowlight. After three great games, came the dip. Each Christmas there had been a brand-new *Tomb Raider* but complacency set in big time. "It all started to go a little sour," says Gavin Rummery. "At this stage the game was just a cash cow. It was all about the money. People in the company wanted to be on the next team because they knew they could make big royalties from it. So the driving force wasn't creativity. The atmosphere in the company started to go downhill at that stage because everyone was fighting over their slice."



Tomb Raider Chronicles

PSN Price: £4.79

Another year, another game. Even though the previous game had lost a sense of engagement, the developers, while tackling some of the problems of the previous game and refining the camera angles, still weren't quite getting it right. Perhaps gamers had become too familiar with the game and with Croft. But too little was being added to the game and the flashback form of the storytelling was all a little too desperate as if the developer had run out of ideas. Attempts to introduce elements such as stealth did little to rescue it.



Tomb Raider Trilogy

PSN Price: Legend (£11.99), Underworld (£16.99), Anniversary (£11.99)

Crystal Dynamics attempts at resurrecting the franchise worked well when it came to see *Tomb Raider Legend*, *Anniversary*, and *Underworld*. The *Tomb Raider Trilogy* took all three games, slapped them on to one PS3 disc and turned them into HD masterpieces that not only shows off the individual games in their own right but the way in which the developer nurtured them and tried to change Lara's fortunes around. It's not easy inheriting a franchise that everyone knows about but with this trio, they succeeded.



Lara Croft & Guardian of Light

PSN Price: £9.99

With the *Tomb Raider* moniker dropped for this game, a lot of good was done for all things Ms Croft. The traditional view-from-the-back was gone and instead it had a raised viewpoint that was akin to those isometric games of the past. The emphasis was placed on the puzzles and battles, some of them mightily epic with waves of baddies. And it worked. Very well indeed. As a download-only title, it soon shot up the must-have lists and proved itself to be one of the year's bargains.



PlayStation 4

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

Despite the fact there's no end in sight in the current-generation console war, PlayStation 4 won't just pop into existence overnight. It takes years of planning, preparation, blood, sweat and tears to bring a console to market. Sony will be working on its new PlayStation right now, Microsoft will be crafting the Xbox's successor and Nintendo has already announced its next-generation... thing, so Play sat down with analysts and developers to see what went wrong this generation, what went right, and what they'd do with PS4



The technology inside

Consoles, and players' expectations of them, are changing. How can Sony keep up?

The rise of social gaming must have sent a shudder through the spines of the bosses at Sony and Microsoft around about 2007. After crafting futuristic boxes filled with raw horsepower and enough technology to start (and end) a small war, they found themselves being outsold by the Wii's savvy commitment to making sure everyone's mother could play those dangerous game-tapes she'd heard so much about.

"It is clear by the success of the Xbox 360, Facebook and Apple that the key drivers for entertainment is content and online services, not necessarily the physical technology," Jesse Divnich, VP at consultancy firm EEDAR told us. "While having the best-looking games is a great driver initially, in the long run consumers tend to gravitate more towards the content and services. Basically, what I am saying is that graphics are a fad."

Strong words, but is the future really going to be based around *Angry Birds* rip-offs and *'EyePet 356'*?

Possible, but unlikely. The way people interact with games will change, however: Sony won't be positioning PS4 as a 'hardcore machine', and publishers probably wouldn't go near it if it did.

"We're at an interesting point where the traditional way of measuring technology doesn't affect the type of game we do," Gusto Games' Andrew Hersee told us. "We're more looking at the actual gameplay. It's more about what innovations they can come up with on controllers and things like that which is most exciting, and how it's integrated with mobile space, that's what's important."

Jesse Divnich, too, sees the next round of consoles as the true realisation of Sony's much-repeated 'It only does everything' mantra.

"I expect the total entertainment package that all the console manufacturers have been promising since 2001. The goal of the console manufacturers is for the consumer to have the console powered on constantly, like a refrigerator, but right now there isn't much motivation to do such."

"I still use my set-top cable box for my television shows, a different platform to stream movies, my laptop to update my Facebook status, and my iPhone to tweet. Finding a way to converge all those entertainment and social interactions into one platform is truly the Holy Grail of living room ownership."



Cloud replacing Blu-ray?

Is it true? Will 'cloud' gaming replace physical media on PS4?

No, don't be mental. Having said that, Sony's decision to use Blu-ray hasn't been a cheap one, but Sony would be crazy not to carry on with the format.

That said, services like OnLive and Gaikai enable players to play games that are 'streamed' to dumb terminals (ie machines that don't have the capacity to actually play them) and with a good enough net connection the lag will be tolerable. We've tried OnLive here and it's extremely impressive conceptually, streaming brand-new games to our years-old PCs. At one

point we even played a PC game on a Mac, which broke our minds and nearly forced us all to resign.

PS4 won't have this, but we wouldn't be surprised if PS15 did. We're already seeing the first steps towards this with PS3's ability to upload saves to a cloud so you can carry on playing later at a different location. Steam, too, enables you to access your game collection from almost any terminal. Broadband speeds will have a big part to play, of course, but expect this to get much bigger in the coming years.



“ It is clear by the success of the Xbox 360, Facebook and Apple that the key drivers for entertainment is content and online services ”

Jesse Divnich, VP, EEDAR

Your Trophies

Accolades likely to be carried over

PS3's equivalent of 360's Achievements system has been a roaring success since its inception in 2008, and there's no way that Sony is going to turn its back on such a popular system. With the future of interactive entertainment apparently skewing towards social experiences, Trophies represent the ultimate in bragging rights, and we fully expect them to be migrated to PS4. >



PlayStation 4

Image courtesy of ifixit.com



>PlayStation 4 not tech-heavy

Why cutting-edge components won't be the priority and why PlayStation4 slim is unlikely

Look at the recent Wii revision, then look at the same deal for PS3 and 360. Big difference, and we have a suspicion that any PS4 revision will be more like the former than the latter: in other words, minor tweaks rather than wholesale changes.

The reason? The PS4 won't be as jam-packed with cutting-edge components as the earlier models, relying on off-the-shelf parts that hit the sweet spot between high power and low cost instead. Well, according to our learned friends that is. With social gaming having never been bigger, a lot of industry experts believe that Sony shouldn't ram the PS4 with all the tech under the sun.

"Don't over-engineer your console to the extent that it's not cost competitive, and you're forced to take a loss on each console in order to compete," is Wedbush Morgan analyst Michael Pachter's advice.

Analyst Edward Woo, also of Wedbush Morgan, also agrees. "By putting in so

much technology, it forced Sony to price the product much higher than Nintendo's Wii and Xbox 360... The technology of the PS3 is better, and the Blu-ray is a plus, but for most gamers, the difference is not enough to overcome the network effect Xbox Live has with its larger, more dedicated fans."

So we can expect to see a lot of industry insiders come down on the side of Jesse Divnich's appraisal that "I can definitely say that we shouldn't expect a huge jump in visuals."

"Since this generation's skyrocketing production costs left the industry reeling, I'd be happy if the system power went up just enough to make 60fps at 1080p viable with current-ish level assets," said Emil Dotchevski, head of Reverge Labs (who created 2D fighting game *Skullgirls* for PSN). With videogame graphics already creeping up on the mythical photorealism, the days of the leap between PSone/PS2/PS3 could be behind us.

“Don't over-engineer your console to the extent that it is not cost competitive”

Michael Pachter, analyst, Wedbush Morgan



Motion controls

Nothing to see here for Sony's motion controller?

Let's face it: the Move hasn't exactly set the world alight. One member of the **Play** team who owns one at home hasn't even taken it out of the box. Ouch.

As ever, it's a question of software, but with even Nintendo dropping the outrageously successful Wiimote as the primary input device of the Wii, then what hope is there for the Move?

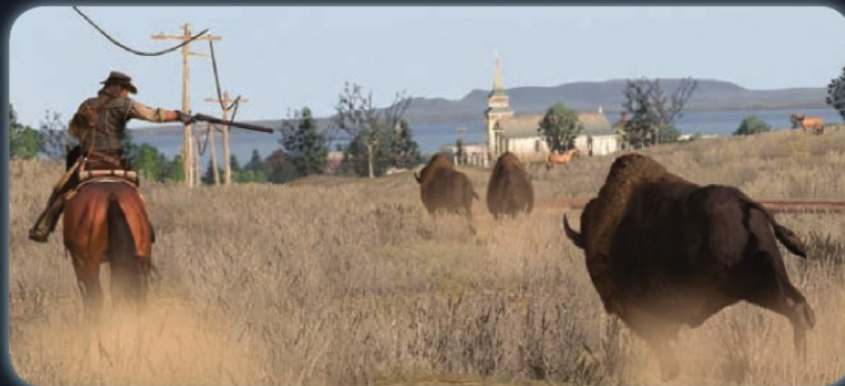
Well, despite the less-than-stellar performance of the motion controller, we think that Move integration (or something like it) will feature in Sony's next machine, especially with

the rise of so-called 'casual' play, and we're not the only ones.

"The reason why the Wii did so well is that everyone has that controller. How many people have bought Move or Kinect?" Hersee told us.

"[For] the people purchasing the platform, what that platform offers at that purchase point is [how] the consumer decides what platform to buy. So if the consumer likes motion [controls] they're going to choose the platform that suits that style of play.

"I think it's important for it to be there at launch. It would certainly help."



Casual vs hardcore

The real money's in games we don't like. Or is it?

If Sony wants to stay competitive next-gen then it's going to have to progress further and further into the social, or casual, games sector. With the next generation shaping up to be some sort of monstrous wasteland of *Farmville* clones, you'd think we'd be officially worried. We're not.

Why? Because casual games aren't always what they appear. Just because it's technically easy to play doesn't mean that it is easy to master, as anyone that's played *Cut The Rope* on iOS will attest.

Granted, *Angry Birds*' 100 million-plus sales are certainly impressive, but Sony isn't about to abandon so-called hardcore games with PS4. You'll still be playing man-shoot and car-porn experiences such as *Gran Turismo*, *Uncharted* and

Call Of Duty. You'll still have more shooters than you could ever play. As a matter of consequence of a changing attitude to what 'games' actually are you'll get more titles skewed towards genres that aren't 'core', but crucially, however, you'll also have more games that *are* core due to the ease of development that not having a massive generational leap will bring. If the PlayStation Network expands as everyone thinks it will, development costs don't skyrocket and the new tech is incremental rather than mental (enabling developers to use tech they're already familiar with) and we'll be getting far more quality games across all spectrums, as devs don't have to bankrupt themselves attempting to push a game out.

The future of 'online'

What's next for PlayStation Network?

If analysts and developers are to be believed, soon there should be no such thing as on and offline. Instead, there should be a console that is always on, always ready for communication, and crucially not constrained to the walled garden of singular networks.

"[We need] seamless integration and dual communication of outside platforms," Jesse Divnich told us. "Basically the ability for my iPhone to talk to my PlayStation 3 and for it to talk back. Right now the communication is mostly one way. For example, with the *Dragon Age* Facebook game, I can earn special in-game items for *Dragon Age II* for the HD console version, but it requires me to write down the code from Facebook and enter it manually into the console's online store front. If a platform can remove these barriers it would create an immersive entertaining experience that could follow you everywhere.

"For most people, we couldn't sneak in a quick run of *Call Of Duty* on the PlayStation 3 while at work; however, we could (and have) sneaked in a quick game of *Farmville*. The next step is being able to play *FIFA*'s Facebook game and earning points that apply to the PlayStation HD version."

It's an attitude that Sony has already experimented with, enabling PS3

owners to engage in cross-platform play with their Steam counterparts on PC and Mac, and some developers are hopeful it can get even better.

"[Open networks are] probably there already," Andrew Hersee, lead programmer of dance title *Get Up And Dance* told us. "It just requires people to get the go-ahead from Sony, as long as it's a good feature. It comes down to the cost of maintaining servers and the size of your project."

Network-wise one thing that Sony did get right is the inclusion of a hard drive in every box. "The whole point of consoles is to have a standardised platform you can push to the limit, and you obviously can't do that if one of your SKUs is missing a crucial component with major development implications," Emil Dotchevski stated. "It's frustrating on 360 to sit there knowing you could do all these awesome things with a hard drive, but can't use it because maybe ten per cent of the audience doesn't have one.

"Sure, install times can be annoying, but the hard drive can greatly improve the game experience for players. It's great for business, too, because it ensures that everyone with your platform can actually buy digital games right out of the box."

With the world turning to digital, expect closed network walls to be torn down very quickly. >

"We need seamless integration and dual communication of outside platforms"

Jesse Divnich, VP, EEDAR



This is just the start if our experts are right.



XMB = DOA?

What kind of interface will the PS4 have?

Let's face it: the XrossMediaBar (XMB) isn't the greatest of interfaces. Cool, clean and very typically 'Sony' it might be, but it's also dull and laborious to navigate. This will change for PlayStation 4, and we've already seen Vita move away from the system.

"They should fix the XMB, which I find incredibly confusing, and replace it with something like the blade system used by Xbox 360," stated Michael Pachter.

We agree with him (up to a point – Microsoft hasn't actually used the 'blade' system as a primary interface for around three years) but we certainly expect the new system to be bright, colourful, and easy to navigate. Y'know, so the kids/grandparents can get on board.



Which of these looks more appealing? Exactly.

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PSVITA

LAUNCH DATE

Japanese launch date for PlayStation Vita is 17 December. No release dates outside of Japan have been confirmed except that the US and Europe can expect the handheld in 2012. We reckon the portable will hit our shelves some time in March 2012.

BATTERY LIFE

Between three and five hours on a single charge, if you're playing games offline on the default settings. Your battery lasts five hours if you're watching video, nine if you're listening to music. To fully charge your PS Vita takes two hours and forty minutes.

3G CONNECTIVITY

In Japan, NTT Docomo is supporting the 3G/Wi-Fi model of PS Vita. Obviously, that means nothing over here, but the provider for UK still hasn't been confirmed. What is interesting is that pre-paid cards with an hourly limit, not data limit, will be used.

THE VERDICTS

Mitsuo Hirakawa

JOB: Producer, Sony Europe
GAME: *Reality Fighters*

With so many features do you need to be careful not to try too much too soon with PS Vita?

I think that depends on the game design. For Novarama, we are passionate about handheld consoles and the Vita is a great console to base your game ideas because it has opened up new possibilities. Vita allows developers like us to think creatively and make Vita-specific games from the ground up. When we initially saw the Vita spec, we felt like a kid in a candy store with so many features to use, but we've tried to focus on the best Vita features that made sense for our game design, and build on it, as opposed to approaching it thin and wide.

How important do you feel cloud saving is going to be for PS Vita?

I think cloud gaming is becoming more important as it has several benefits that adapts to our (ever-changing) lifestyle needs [and] can enhance your gaming experience. As an example, Vita save data can be saved in cloud, then downloaded onto a PlayStation 3 (through cross-play) in another location. Vita games can also make use of GPS location data, so if you combine all these elements, you can create new ideas for your game.

How does the PS Vita compare to the original PSP as a platform to develop for?

As a developer, there is significantly more support and two-way communication from Sony for PS Vita. As an example, features like *Near* have been developed with input from developers in mind, so we've all had a chance in shaping how the features are developed. So in that sense, I am very happy with the way Sony has approached the development community.

Pete Smith

JOB: Producer, Media Molecule
GAME: *LittleBigPlanet*

What would you say is the PS Vita's most important feature?

Initially a lot of talk has been about the rear touch screen. Having a rear touch interface is a genuinely new experience and as designers get to grips with it I think we'll see all kinds of new innovative experiences built around it that wouldn't work without rear touch. However, over time, I think the most important feature will prove to be the online capabilities. Portable gaming benefits massively from online. The plans we have for apps like *Near* and *Party* are very exciting and this combined with GPS gives designers loads of possibilities and should result in some fantastic social gaming experiences.

Are you planning to make your game playable on PS3 as well as PS Vita? Is that a difficult thing to achieve?

Well *LittleBigPlanet* is already on PS3, however, the PS Vita version is a completely new game built specifically for the PS Vita. We talked about porting

the PS3 version in the early days, but that didn't feel very '*LBP*' and we thought it would be a missed opportunity not to build something bespoke from the ground up. The game really feels like it was made for PS Vita, small bite-sized games work really well on a handheld and with the new tools we're adding it is easier than ever to create these kinds of games in *LBP*. That being said we absolutely do not want to split the community that the PS3 versions have created. As a result *lbp.me* (our website to help find cool levels) works across both PS3 and PS Vita. Also it felt that it would be fair to allow people who have bought costumes for the PS3 version to get them for free on the PS Vita version, so we've done that as well.

What do you think the PS Vita will be able to achieve in the future?

To be blunt I think the PS Vita can become the undisputed king of the handhelds. For this to happen it needs an awesome feature set and some fantastic games. The feature set is definitely there and from what I have seen of the game being developed I think the future of the PS Vita is very bright indeed.



Jonathan Mak & Shaw-Han Liem

JOB: Designers, Queasy Games
GAME: SoundShapes

What was the first thing about the PSVita that really impressed you?

JM: I just liked the idea of a powerful portable. I usually like to play games lying down in bed or lying down on the couch. It's hard to do that with non-portable consoles/PC.

SL: The combination of the touch screens and the traditional D-pad/button layout really inspired a lot of ideas about being able to combine traditional gaming with newer touch and gesture-based control schemes. For a music game, being able to let the user interact with the music in a variety of ways is really important.

With so many features do you need to be careful not to try too much too soon with PSVita?

JM: As when designing anything, you have to be certain that using the feature will truly benefit the project. If it makes the game better, use it!

SL: Because *SoundShapes* is a somewhat new type of game, there are a lot of new ideas that come out of our brainstorming and experimentation. As Jon said, we didn't want to use Vita features as a gimmick, but as a core part of the gameplay.

What game on PSVita (other than your own) are you most looking forward to playing?

JM: Right now I'm super busy working on *SoundShapes* to know what's going on in the world but afterwards, the first game I want to play is 'Sleep' where I lay in bed and sleep all day.

SL: I think games that encourage players to get creative and make cool stuff are exciting on a mobile platform. So I'm looking forward to playing *LittleBigPlanet* and *ModNation Racers* on Vita when it's released.



THE GAMES

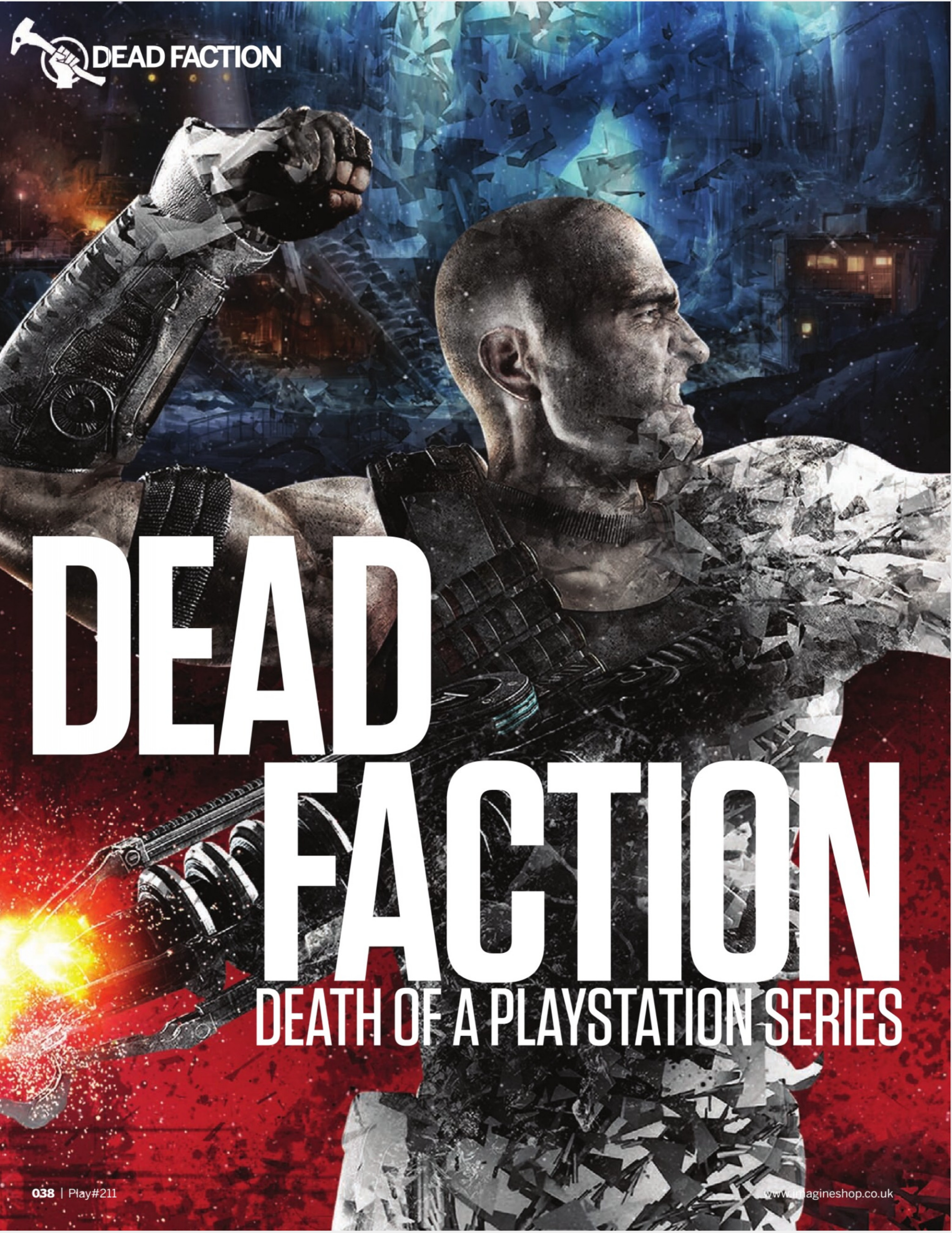
PlayStation Vita currently has 74 titles in development, with the number increasing all the time. The early lack of Square Enix titles was a concern but it's now on board with *Final Fantasy X HD*, which will also be available on PS3. Likewise, *Metal Gear Solid HD Edition*, *Zone Of The Enders HD* and *Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3* will be released for Vita.

Hideo Kojima also confirmed his bespoke Fox Engine will support Vita, but warns his next title for the platform is at least a few years away. Given Kojima's history of innovation on portables – his *Boktai* series on Game Boy used a photometric sensor that measured sun as a gameplay gimmick – expect something adventurous.

PSVita has its killer app in *Uncharted: Golden Abyss* but it's traditionally new IP that sells portables – *Monster Hunter* kick-started PSP in Japan and *Nintendogs* did the same for DS.

JAPANESE LAUNCH LINE-UP

Uncharted: Golden Abyss
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend
Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3
F1 2011
Shinobido 2: Tales Of The Ninja
Katamari Damacy
Ridge Racer
Disgaea 3 Return
Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour Edition
Dynasty Warriors Next
Dark Quest
Michael Jackson: The Experience HD
Little Deviants
Project N.O.E.L.S.
3gokushi Touchbattle
Nature Of Night Of Kamaitachi – 11th Visitor, A Suspect
Dream C Club Zero Portable
Niconico
Fis Oh
@field
Minnato To Issho
Hot Shots Golf Next (Everybody's Golf Next)
Yuusha No Kiroku
Monster Radar
Army Corps Of Hell
Lord Of Apocalypse



DEAD FACTION

DEATH OF A PLAYSTATION SERIES

DEATH OF A PLAYSTATION SERIES



● Vehicles, destruction, red stuff – this is pretty much *Red Faction* summed up in one shot.



● A stronger focus on story didn't help the series for many fans.



Red Faction is dead, but there isn't time to mourn. We should learn from the past and appreciate what the series gave us – and we should ask **Volition** staffers, past and present, just why this is the death of a PlayStation legend

Red Faction: Armageddon was a failure. It didn't strike with critics, earning an unimpressive 62% in *Play 207* – and sales were underwhelming at best. Not only did it signal a fall from grace for a cult classic PlayStation series: it was the death knell. *Red Faction* is over.

What went wrong? The original was a game-changer for console FPS games, and *Guerrilla* has a place in the heart of just about everyone who ever played it. How could things have changed so much in such a short period of time? Wayne Adams, environment artist on *Red Faction: Guerrilla*, tells us his thoughts: "The last game had one flaw and that was interference. What people play, when they play *Red Faction: Armageddon*, is not what it started out to be. A lot was changed on the story side of things. Elements were introduced and things had to either be scrapped or re-purposed to keep up with the game. In the end hard decisions had to be made and what could have been was restructured into what the team could do with the amount of time they had. I can't say whether or not the original ideas would have been better but I think consistency was lost in all of the turmoil of change."

Matt Kresge, weapon artist on *Red Faction* and *Red Faction 2*, throws his hat in the ring: "I think *Armageddon* is just one of the latest casualties of the seismic shift occurring in the videogame marketplace today... There are also some wildcard factors like shooter fans possibly being more difficult to reach in the era of \$150+ million marketing campaigns or the rise of triple-A titles that have sky-high production values. High quality is almost a given for console games

today and being great does not mean as much as it used to back in the PS2/Xbox days."

Josh Nizzi, artist on the first two games, has another theory: "I feel like the world of *Red Faction* has become indistinguishable. If I look at a screenshot from *Armageddon* I wouldn't be able to tell what game it's from. Personally I would have gone back to the space suits and industrial gear of the original that felt more like being on Mars and more unique."

But what about *Volition* itself? How does it feel? It's unsurprising to see that Jim Boone, producer at the developer, is more reserved in his post-mortem, and it's unsurprising that money comes into it: "The way I look at it is this – gamers don't really care how much money a developer spends to make a game, for them it costs \$60 either way. From a development standpoint, we need to create games that really offer something special for gamers. This often boils down to needing a budget that will help create an experience that appeals to enough gamers to make your game profitable." He goes on: "It really is hard for me to tell what, if anything, went wrong. With *Guerrilla* as an example, we had a game that reviewed well and people really seemed to enjoy, but it just didn't sell the types of numbers we needed. With *Armageddon* we tried to go in a different direction hoping that gamers would be more interested, but that did not work either. At the end of the day I suspect that *Red Faction* was just a great series that has run its course. Being able to create four games within a single franchise is pretty fantastic, and it's pretty rare to see games endlessly making sequels, so perhaps it was just *Red Faction's* time." >



“ I remember Tim Schroeder always gave guys in the office haircuts in the office bathroom. For some reason that sticks in my head ”

John Slagel, Geo-Mod creator

● Alien invasions and a distinct lack of red? Oh, *Armageddon*.

> But let's take a few steps back to the heady days of *The Past*: the original *Red Faction*, released in 2001, was a different beast and Volition was a much smaller entity. So it was easier, right? "Aside from losing our original publisher, dropping the idea that it would be a continuation of the *Descent* franchise and having to invent an entirely new game from scratch, it was smooth sailing," says Geoffrey Smith, modelling and texture artist on the first two titles, who has clearly mastered the art of the understatement. Safe to say, it was never 'smooth sailing' on Volition's FPS trailblazer: "*Red Faction* actually started its life as part of a completely different franchise. Originally it was developed as *Descent 4*," says Boone. "In the early stages of *Descent 4*, there were a couple of key decisions made that helped turn it into a whole new franchise. First was the development of the Geo-Mod technology, allowing you to blow a hole in (nearly) any part of the world. We thought that would be great in a world full of mining operations, which was a core part of the *Descent* fiction. The other interesting change that was discussed was getting the player out of the vehicle from time to time. Players would pilot the Pyro flying vehicle and then get out and explore on foot. Ultimately we realised the on-foot portion was even more fun than our standard formula of constant flying, so we decided to concentrate on that." Rights changed hands, the *Descent* name was lost and *Red Faction* was born. Originally with players taking the role of a headband-sporting 12-year-old boy, at least until "it became pretty clear that 12 year olds with rocket launchers seemed like a congressional hearing waiting to happen," according to Kresge.



“Volition, being the good-natured folks they are, decided instead of trying to forget it, that it should become a shout-out. It was probably one of the greatest things I ever saw evolve on a project”

Wayne Adams, on *Guerrilla's Ostrich Hammer*

The biggest change the *Red Faction* series brought to the world of gaming was Geo-Mod – the tech that allowed players to blast through walls and floors in order to create new routes, bypass doors or find new ways to get at enemies. It was, simply, the cornerstone of every title. So obviously, it wasn't easy. John Slagel, creator of the Geo-Mod engine, is frank about his baby: "The less obvious big challenge was we had this design mantra of 'we're doing Geo-Mod, period. It needs to drive gameplay, period. It needs to be fun.' That was very hard to do. In my opinion, at the end of the project and with hindsight, I think that Geo-Mod is a great effect, games that do not have it seem flat and I think trying to make it drive gameplay was a noble goal. But in the end had we done it over and said 'we're doing Geo-Mod as an awesome effect. It does not need to drive gameplay' we would have had a much better game, series, engine."

None of this is to say Geo-Mod was anything other than impressive – and fun – throughout the series' life span. In fact, it was always a surprise that no other title outside of *Red Faction* used the tech. Slagel had a reason for this – his development of Geo-Mod wasn't

optimised for still-fledgling 3D accelerator technology. "At the core, the engine's low-level code was outdated by the time it was released. No one would want to use it as is for a commercial project." He's not down on his creation, though: "Making Geo-Mod an integral part of gameplay is like trying to make doors be an integral part of gameplay. Kind of boring and seems contrived in most cases. However, as an effect, I think every game should have it, same as shadows, blast marks, bullet marks, volumetric fog, dynamic lighting." Slagel continues: "It is a cool effect, but it has a *high* cost. It impacts everything: rendering speed, memory, AI, physics, multiplayer... I can see why people don't bother."

There were other concerns to address, too, according to Kresge: "By opening up the world to be truly destructible it gave players the freedom to circumvent entire sections of the game or bypass puzzles or challenges altogether by digging holes around locked doors or tunneling under walls. This freedom of destruction also allowed players to easily get stuck in a hole if they were not careful. After a lot of play-testing a decision was made to restrict explosive weapon ammunition in order to keep these kinds of game-breaking issues to a minimum." >



● The original, while it's dated these days, was a trailblazer in terms of console FPSs.



● PEEK-A-BOO!



VOLITION, OF ITS OWN VOLITION

Every single person we spoke to was all too happy to talk up how brilliant a company **Volition** is to work for. So here are a few examples of this heartwarming gumph

Geoffrey Smith: "The creative environment of *Red Faction* was unparalleled in my professional experience. Going to work was like going to play in the sandbox when I was a kid. That experience is far too rare in game creation these days."

Josh Nizzi: "Working on *Red Faction* was the best experience I've had working in games."

John Slagel: "There is almost a nostalgia to me of the game, the team, the development environment back then. I look forward to a team reunion."

"A few months ago, my five-year-old boy was really getting into playing the little demo game in *Red Faction*, the Glass House level. I don't let him play the real game, it's too scary and violent for this particular five year old. One day I noticed he could move around well enough that I thought 'I wonder if he would like multiplayer'. So I set it up on two PCs at home and played with him. He was absolutely amazed that we could both play in the same level at the same time and was just giddy with excitement and for the first time, he was amazed by something I had done. My heart almost burst with pride. That was one of the highlights of my life."

Wayne Adams: "I am very sad if *Red Faction* is truly dead. Working on it was an honour and the teams who have made it what they are, are the most talented and creative people in the industry."

Matt Kresge: "For me being a part of *Red Faction* was much more than just making a videogame, I got a tattoo on my right arm shortly after the original shipped as a way of remembering the experience and to carry with me the memory of working with such an amazing group of people."

"I don't think you could say the teams on *Red Faction* and *Red Faction 2* were just dedicated, it was more like we had a compulsive duty to give back to the gaming community and try to create amazing experiences for them."

Dale Inghram: "The actual recording process was a blast and to this day is one of my favourite games to have worked on. I've always taken a bit of pride being part of the first one and watching the success in years to come always gave me the sense of satisfaction that one can only get having been there on the bottom floor."

DEATH OF A PLAYSTATION SERIES



● No need to look so sad, it's not like the series has di... oh wait. Sorry.



● Weaponry throughout the series was designed specifically to allow messing about.



“What I remember the most was how excited everyone was about *Red Faction*. There seemed to be an overwhelming sense of hope that comes with breaking new barriers”

Dale Inghram, voice actor for Parker in *Red Faction*



MAGNETIC PERSONALITY



Armageddon wasn't great, but the Magnet Gun was. Did **Matt Kresge** wish that was something he'd been involved in the creation of?

"I do. All the time. It haunts my dreams... mocking me. Its awesomeness calling out. Its seductive fun caressing me like – wait, what was I saying? Yes, the Magnet Gun is definitely one of the coolest weapons to come along in quite some time. The Volition guys always try to push the boundaries of awesome and really topped themselves with that one."



● The lasting legacy of *Red Faction* is one of total destruction.

● Revolutionary socialism took a back seat to B-movie sci-fi nonsense as the series progressed.



● *Armageddon* wasn't terrible, but it was thoroughly dull.



“I doubt many people know this, but all of the *Red Faction* dev team are in the game. I put their faces on various enemies”

Josh Nizzi, who also gave the character of Masako his wife's face

➤ Ultimately it wasn't a perfect system, but it offered a glimpse of the future of gaming that everyone could enjoy.

The original *Red Faction* was one of the first wave of console FPS titles that really felt at home on PS2. Did Boone think it was this important? "Honestly I really do. This was a time when FPS games were still pretty geared for the PC. When *Red Faction* first came out, developers were asking questions like whether we could ever get a controller to do what the mouse and keyboard have always allowed FPS games to do on the PC. With games like *Red Faction*, I think we helped show you could have a really compelling FPS experience on consoles. It was neither superior nor inferior to PC, just a different flavour of the genre we all loved." Nizzi agrees: "The *Red Faction* series was a pioneer of the FPS genre on consoles," but over time, "I think competition has overtaken it. It's hard to compete with *Gears Of War*, *Modern Warfare* and *Halo*."

The sequel, which arrived in 2002, wasn't as well received as the first game – Nizzi, again, is happy to tell us why: "Red Faction 2 had very limited Geo-Mod and was much more story driven, which is one of the big reasons why I think the original is a better game. Actually, the development of *Red Faction 2* was kind of a train wreck. It took a long time to come up with a direction

for the game and then it was basically crunch till the end. There was some annoying drama within the team as well that mostly stemmed from mismanagement and lack of direction – growing a company is hard." The drama didn't stop there, as Nizzi goes on: "After *Red Faction 2* we started on *Red Faction 3* and I was the lead artist on the project – before THQ decided that sci-fi doesn't sell and the market needed more *Grand Theft Auto*-type games. So *Red Faction 3* got put on indefinite hold." He explains how this decision ended his attachment to the series: "That project was going to restore a lot of the things from the original that I felt made the series unique. I certainly don't fault THQ or anybody for that decision, after all it is their money paying for everything."

It took seven years for *Red Faction 3* (now named *Guerrilla*) to hit, in 2009 – an open-world, third-person hammer-'em-up and a cult classic in every respect. As Boone tells us: "The goal was to create a game with *Guerrilla* that was so compelling that even people that had never played any of the previous *Red Faction* games would still be interested in what *Guerrilla* had to offer." The setting took things back to Mars but out of the mines of the first game, onto the terraformed surface. As Adams explains: "I think the overall



“Originally we considered a single big name star for the lead character in *Red Faction 2*, like Nicolas Cage”

Matt Kresge, before opting for Jason Statham



feeling was a Wild West on Mars, it was what I took from the project and what I tried to push in my work. The barren landscapes dotted with settlements, with roving Marauders everywhere. To me that was my favourite part." And was this a realistic representation of the Red Planet? "I don't think it was the goal. The terraformed sky, people walking around without space suits... Mars, in the game, has evolved to this whole new thing: it's a breathing, working world now, which allowed us to push ideas that may contradict with other Mars fiction because, really, Mars isn't Mars any more in *Guerrilla*."

The third game was a success from a critical perspective, but its status as something of a cult hit held it back from being a real mainstream darling. And Volition was all too aware of this, as Boone points out: "With *Guerrilla* we had a game that reviewed well and people really seemed to enjoy, but it just didn't sell the types of numbers we needed." Even before sales figures came back, though, there were plans in motion for what would eventually become *Armageddon*. "Armageddon was planned and pre-development started long before we knew how *Guerrilla* would do in the market," Adams says. "I think that's a testament to how much faith we had in *Guerrilla*. We knew it would deserve a sequel."

It looked like the series was back for a strong run. Then *Armageddon* hit, in more than one sense of the word. Suddenly, *Red Faction* was over, and we're back to the opening paragraphs of this feature again. It was surprising, but maybe not to Volition itself, as Boone says: "Anyone that was expecting *Guerrilla 2* would have been pretty surprised to see *Armageddon*. For those that have been with the series from the beginning, they may have been used to seeing the types of changes we've taken throughout the series, but I think *Armageddon* just didn't give people what they expected."

It's ten years of history at one of the most interesting developers out there and the theme is clear – the feeling cannot be doubted: there was a lot of love for *Red Faction*. But love alone can't keep the wolves from the door, and this is a series very much consigned to the scrapheap it helped keep teeming with debris for so many years. And what better way to leave it than with this little snippet from Nizzi, speaking about the time just after the original game's release: "I remember an email from Mike Kulas [Volition founder] to the team saying something like, 'For all of you guys that are new to game development: it's not normally this great.' And that was true, unfortunately."



“Unfortunately, we soon found out that the success of *Red Faction* ended up ruining the creative environment of the sequel”

Geoffrey Smith, on the difficulties of Volition's growth

● Yes, it's a unicorn crapping laser beams. *Volition: GSOH*.



● *Battlegrounds* wasn't developed by Volition. It was also crap.



QUESTION: The second and fourth games were received less favourably than the first and third. They also feature less red. Coincidence?

ANSWER: "I don't think this had anything to do with there being less red in the game. I believe this is just a reverse of the *Star Trek* movies where our even numbered games didn't do as well as our odd numbered games. Who knew?!" **Jim Boone, Volition**



Use the **SciFiNow** flowchart to find out...



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PLAY Preview

点検

Playing bad games so you don't have to

Including: Final Fantasy XIII-2 levels up /// Max Payne 3 – worthy sequel or 'Payne & Lynch'? /// Battlefield 3 shows off for the last time



52 Assassin's Creed Revelations

Bigger, better, broader, ballsier

on preview

46 Final Fantasy XIII-2 PS3

After the do-we-love-it-or-hate-it *Final Fantasy XIII*, Squenix retools with this direct sequel.

52 Assassin's Creed Revelations PS3

Where can *Assassin's Creed* go from here, you ask? Read our preview, we reply.

54 Syndicate PS3

Classic series returns with FPS gameplay and Skrillex on the soundtrack. Wubwubwub.

56 Max Payne 3 PS3

Rockstar turns to its brooding antihero and ignores the film. Except the Mila Kunis bits.

58 Soul Calibur V PS3

It's Round 5 for Namco Bandai's historical weapons brawler but how will it shine this time round?

60 Sonic Generations PS3

He doesn't turn into a werewolf or a weehog. Big The Cat isn't in it and neither is Silver. Win!

61 Far Cry 3 PS3

Quick preview for hurried *Play* reader: it's more like *Far Cry* than *Far Cry 2*, which is good.

62 Battlefield 3 PS3

EA wheels out its explosive shooter for the last time but will it stand up to *Modern Warfare 3*?

64 Counter-Strike: Global Offensive PS3

A new challenger! Valve quietly smuggles its PC classic into the FPS war.

66 Preview Round-up PS3

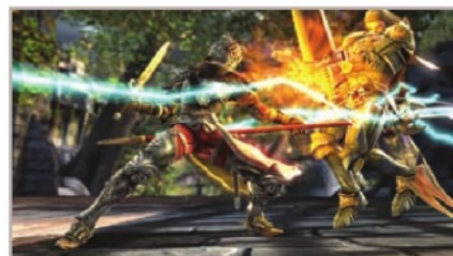
Yakuza: Dead Souls and *I Am Alive* are two of the games featured. What are the rest? Have a look, duh.



46 Final Fantasy XIII-2 PS3
Square Enix fixes its mistakes



54 Syndicate PS3
The worst-kept secret is finally out



58 Soul Calibur V PS3
Welcome to the stage of history

Get in touch!

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PREVIEW

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation



IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME

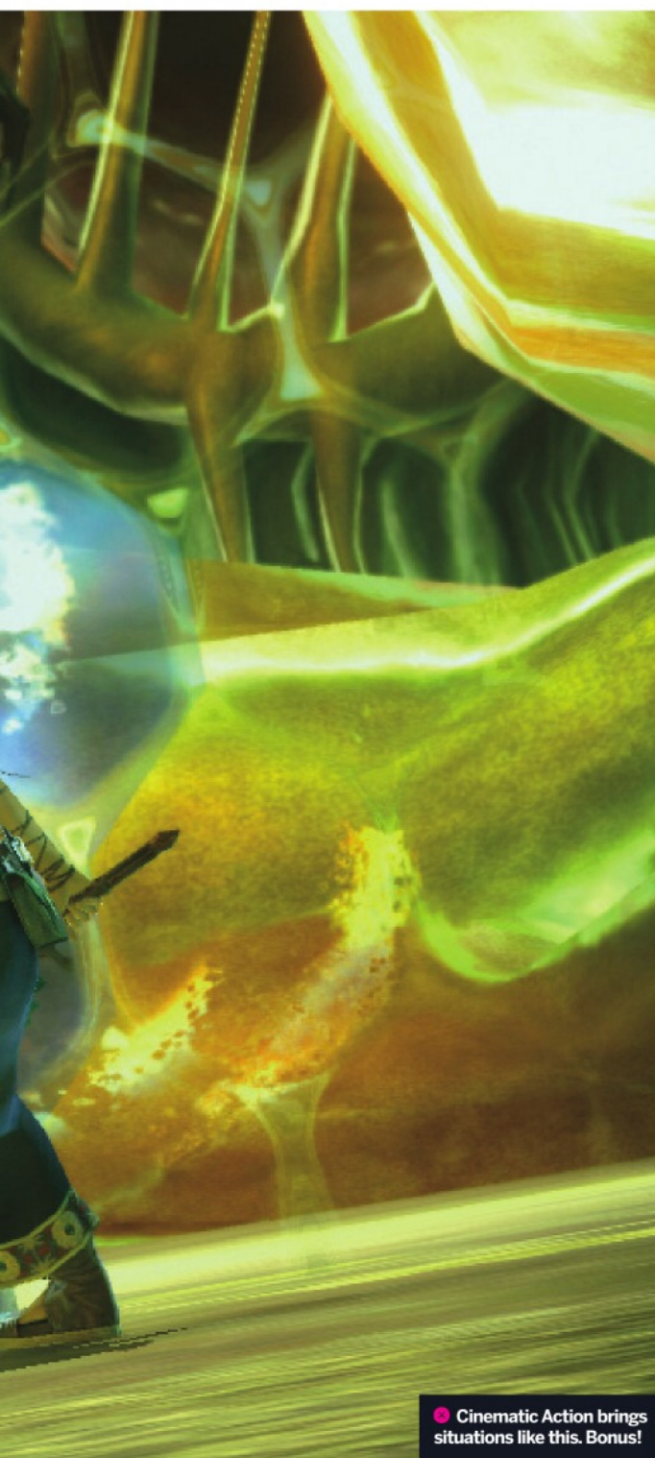
Good? Bad? It's all random

WE'VE TALKED IN the past about the Mog Clock feature – quick reminder, it's a timer that appears when you're about to get into a fight with a creature. Hit them when it's green, get a bonus. Miss them until it's red, get a penalty – it's quite simple. What we didn't really consider until our time with *XIII-2* is that the system effectively reinstates random battles. You don't see enemies on the field until they're right on top of you, and while you can run away most of the time, it's not a simple case of picking and choosing your battles like before.



● Attaaaaack of the killer tomatoes! We think.





Cinematic Action brings situations like this. Bonus!



He might not have been forced.
Maybe it was something he asked for.

RELEASE DATE: 3 FEBRUARY

Final Fantasy XIII-2

The more things change, the more they... change



If we were given ten hours with which to preview *Final Fantasy XIII* we would be presenting you with four pages covering a tutorial. That's not even a joke. It's barely an exaggeration. But being given ten hours to play *Final Fantasy XIII-2*, one of those super-rare direct sequels Square Enix sometimes does, means we have four pages covering... well, a *Final Fantasy* game. It turns out when we all complained, somebody did indeed listen.

An extended opening sequence sets the scene and introduces players to the Cinematic Action element of the game (QTEs to you and me). It's *Final Fantasy* as we would all expect – overblown, dramatic, beautiful and just a bit confusing. Soon enough, it's over – effectively your tutorial is done – and players are dropped into a... no... this can't be right, can it? A town? With people to talk to? And cats to chase? And water to

wade in? Shouldn't we be getting constantly pressed on and not allowed to take on side quests or simply saunter about for another 24 hours of playing time, just like *FFXIII*?

But we already said – Squenix *listened*. You'll be visiting towns, talking to NPCs, not constantly pressed on into the next area. You'll be able to take on side quests almost immediately, and you'll be able to talk to actual shopkeepers rather than a floating save-ball of doom. Even Hope – at least in the time we met him – was less annoying than in *XIII*.

What do we mean by 'the time we met him'? Well, this is a *Final Fantasy* that takes its cues from *Chrono Trigger* (and *Cross*, of course), dallying with the whole concept of time travel, whizzing around and changing the course of events, dicking about with fate and generally meaning you get to experience a story over hundreds of years, rather than just a few

days/weeks. Far from being just a secondary, storytelling element or a cheap gimmick, the time-travel system – incorporated into what is being called Historia Crux (otherwise known as 'a menu') – has the potential to make *XIII-2* very interesting indeed. As well as very confusing.

Players can take different routes through the game, through different 'episodes' set in different places and times. Depending on choices made in each episode, routes taken through the game will be different and a selection of different endings are available. And the word 'different' is used a lot. You're free to choose to replay entire episodes from the beginning, or simply revisit them as and when you see the need – tried (and failed) to fight a giant flan? Travel to another time, end the paradox that causes said flan to be super-sized, return to the original theatre of combat and face off

PREVIEW



● Snow has finally taken his beanie off. It must stink.

I'll make sure to introduce them to you.
One of these days.

against the newly weakened (and smaller) flan. Naturally that's just a single example, and the choices of routes that can be taken – and the encouragement to replay episodes to pick up new and hidden items – makes for an experience that could well be very deep, if not just ruddy well time-consuming.

The additions thrown into the *XIII-2* pile don't all smack of genius or delicious design decisions, and nowhere is this more evident than with the Live Trigger dialogue system. Think something like *Mass Effect*, or any adventure game where you're allowed the choice of how to respond to something. Then take those responses and make them both sporadically implemented and so they have very little effect on how the story plays out. Then you've got Live Trigger. It's easy to see why it's been brought in – it gives players the illusion that they're having more of an impact on what happens in the game, but the illusion is soon shattered when you're forced to choose all four dialogue options, or when your chosen option makes *nothing at all* change. We already know these elements don't impact the multiple endings of *XIII-2* and the rewards

you receive – at least from what we played – were uninteresting at best. It's one of the areas where, for all it's good to see Square Enix listening and bringing in changes to let players feel more in control, it ends up being utterly pointless. Maybe it will become more important as the game progresses – maybe Squenix will decide it should be more impactful on what actually goes down in the game. But right now, it's a hollow, empty addition.

But, quite genuinely, that's one of the only real negatives we could think of relating to the new additions to *XIII-2*. Historia Crux works, the quick-time events make the usual chore of watching boss battle cut-scenes that bit more interesting and generally speaking it seems as though listening to criticisms of *Final Fantasy XIII* might well pay off in the end.

But that's not to say there aren't still issues with what's been brought over from last time – though this is more down to deliberate design and personal choice rather than outright badness.

Yes, for what we have here is still very much a JRPG, and JRPGs have a very particular style about them. *XIII-2*, for all its

attempts at mass appeal, is no different. Haircuts, androgyny, clumsy dialogue ("I'm grateful you remember me" just sounds stupid), stiff animations and all the other non-game-breaking faults that you will either ignore or rant about endlessly return for another run. But is that something to really complain about? Probably not. But it's fair to highlight the fact.

It's quite interesting to see the differences between the direct sequels of the *Final Fantasy* world. While *X-2* was a camp, J-pop infused sideshow that, while a decent game, didn't have a huge impact, *XIII-2* is looking to be a sequel's sequel. Less a throwaway addition, more how traditional sequels work and – strangely – actually seeming like more of a 'true' *Final Fantasy* game than that it is working as a sequel for. It still won't appeal to everyone, but *XIII-2* has every chance of bringing back some lapsed fans who deserted a series they might have thought lost its way somewhat. Just as long as Vanille is in it as little as possible.

Final Fantasy XIII-2 is being developed by Square Enix Product Development Division 1. Check out www.finalfantasy13-2game.com for more details.



● XIII-2 does look just as nice as XIII, but weirdly it doesn't. Or something.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- There are no ten-hour tutorials this time around, thankfully.
- A much freer, more open experience than *Final Fantasy XIII*.

- Genuinely feels like criticisms have been listened to. In the most part.
- We didn't hear Vanille once, and Hope was less annoying.

READ ME

It's the second time a *Final Fantasy* game has received a direct sequel, but this time it's not a J-pop extravaganza. Thank Thor for that.

EXCLUSIVE



PUZZLING ADDITIONS

Things we didn't see coming: this

YET ANOTHER ADDITION to *XIII-2* comes in the form of 'anomalies' – or, if you want to just say it in non-stupid, direct language: puzzles. Yes, at points in the game players will be expected to find a route from A to B without going back on themselves, create line drawings representing creatures in the *Final Fantasy* universe and link up gems of the same type to – again – form drawings. It won't just be these, there's sure to be more we didn't get to see and, well – they're a bit of a weird addition. That's not to say they're bad, mind you.



XIII-2 HAS EVERYTHING – IT PRESENTS AN ANSWER TO THOSE PEOPLE WHO DIDN'T FULLY ENJOY XIII



MOTOMU TORIYAMA
Director/scenario designer



YOSHINORI KITASE
Producer

Motomu Toriyama and Yoshinori Kitase, director and producer on Final Fantasy XIII-2 respectively, wouldn't come to us to talk up the latest in the Squenix series. So, naturally, we went to them

Is it difficult to include elements of time travel and still make a story that's easy to follow?

Toriyama: Time-travel elements are quite often seen in fantasy or sci-fi and it can be a little bit over the top, complicated or confusing. So we just want to make it as simple as possible so anybody can enjoy that element. We took inspiration from TV

quite simple and we don't expect any players to get confused.

But why time travel specifically?

Toriyama: We incorporated the time-travel element for two purposes – first, at the end of the *Final Fantasy XIII* story Cocoon is destroyed, it's almost like the world comes to an end. So in *XIII-2* the story should try to reveal how the people try to rebuild the world from scratch and re-establish themselves. We wanted to describe that process over a long time span, into the future, so we introduced the new feature

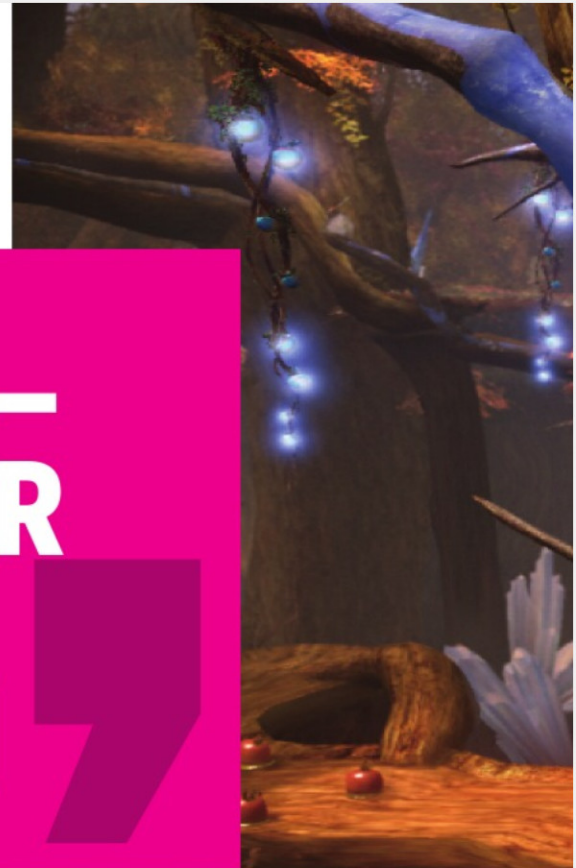
In *XIII-2* the story should try to reveal how the people try to rebuild the world from scratch

drama series, for example, so that each area in each timeline is like an episode – it's a concept called a time paradox that causes a lot of incidents and a lot of drama. So in each episode – meaning one area in time – you have to solve one mystery otherwise you can't move onto the next episode, so it's almost like a drama series in that the plot is completed at the end of every episode as a part of the larger picture. You deal with one thing and move onto another thing – it's

called Historia Crux, which means you can choose a time and area you want to play first. That gives you a very free kind of gameplay. Second, *FFXIII* was criticised by many fans for being linear and having too much emphasis placed on the story over anything else. *XIII-2* has a concept of being a player-driven game, and the time-travel element means you can pick and choose the area you want to play – we wanted to offer the player a kind of freedom they can enjoy.

There have been a lot of changes made to *XIII-2* since the last game – does this mean you think mistakes were made with *Final Fantasy XIII*?

Toriyama: We generally don't feel *XIII* was a mistake or that we made a mistake with it, we don't put it that way. Our goal with *XIII* was telling a good story with a lot of human drama and that was achieved. Because we wanted to introduce a new battle system that was completely new to the series – Paradigm Shifts and things like that – so in order to get it across to the player it did require a much longer tutorial, which was criticised for being





linear and whatever else. Even though the criticism was fair and it was reasonable, it was unavoidable because of the nature of the game – we don't regard it that we made a mistake as such.

You're making changes based on fan feedback – but how much can you, and how much *should* you, listen to fans?

Toriyama: Again, *XIII* was criticised worldwide, and we were in a position to collect views and feedback from all over the world – not just Japan, but America and Europe, too. During the development process we also managed to introduce new phases we were not totally capable of doing before – like during development of *XIII* we couldn't really show the work in progress build and ask, 'what do you think of this? It's not complete, but what do you think at the moment?' But with *XIII-2* in order to collate users' preferences and views we carried out a few research sessions in Japan, North America and Europe in order to try to minimise the gap between the kind of *XIII-2* we were creating and the kind of *XIII-2* they were expecting. So we have achieved that particular goal, which should mean we can offer the kind of *XIII-2* that everybody's expecting.

Are JRPGs being forced to evolve these days?

Kitase: Yes – we always have to progress anyway, but we have to find out what users really want and we have to listen to their preferences which are changing rapidly. But in a way we feel we need to stick to our guns, stick to our original world and we should create the kind of in-game [experience] that nobody else can describe. We introduced *XIII-2* at E3, for example, and we took a look

around – there were lots of military FPS elements, the whole zombie thing and lots of other different things. While RPG marketing is obviously expanding, there are so many games of much the same taste and much the same direction, which means that even if each work is excellent, because there are so many around it can still get lost in a galaxy of similar games. So it is incredibly important now to create something that is original and unique, so that you can be proud of it. *Final Fantasy*'s expression is very colourful and it is quite easily recognisable – that sort of original taste is what we should hang onto, and not let go.

Did any elements you like from *FFXIII* have to be dropped for *XIII-2*?

Toriyama: Basically after *XIII* we listened to people's voices – so many criticisms and so many negatives about what could have been better according to our fans – we just wanted to address every single issue, we just wanted to rectify all of these negative points, which we have done. It's not like we decided not to carry anything over from *XIII* – it's more we wanted to further improve elements that could have been better. For example, people wanted to see more mini-games in *XIII* so we took it on board and implemented more mini-games and more puzzle elements in *XIII-2*. In other words, *XIII-2* has everything – it presents an answer to those people who didn't fully enjoy *XIII*. ☒





RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

Assassin's Creed Revelations

Needlessly Altairing the franchise?

PS3

Bored of *Assassin's Creed* yet? Didn't think so. After a terrible start, the series has resurrected itself in fine style with two brilliant sequels. The third looks to be no different, in terms of quality at least.

What has changed are Ezio's abilities and responsibilities, which have been expanded to enable the ageing assassin to cope with the new obstacles that Constantinople offers. The most basic of these (and the most useful) is the new hookblade mechanic.

Hidden in Ezio's palm, the hookblade enables players to quickly grapple their way out of danger, much like in *Batman: Arkham Asylum*. The streets of 16th Century Turkey are perfect for testing out this new toy, and Ezio was scampering around and changing levels with consummate ease.

The hookblade isn't just for defensive manoeuvres, though, and can be used offensively as well. We saw Ezio fire the blade into the chest of a guard before pulling him close and unleashing some brutality. He probably had it coming anyway.

With the hookblade solving pesky navigation problems it's much easier to get a bearing on the city, and

Constantinople is a breathtaking place. One of the wealthiest cities in the world at the time the game takes place, it's a hive of activity with distinct zones to explore.

It's also a key staging ground in the escalating Templar-Assassin war that forms the backbone of the series' narrative, and Ezio is going to have to work harder than ever to keep Assassin territory from falling into enemy hands. Which means one thing: tower defence mini-games.

The player has a variety of troops at his disposal, and can place them in towers or on rooftops around the city to quell Templar uprisings. They're optional, giving out bonuses to players who engage in them, but choosing not to involve yourself means that you'll lose any towers you've obtained.

It's an interesting pace-changer, but we're worried that it might turn into an irritant if it's repeated over and over. No one wants a repeat of *San Andreas*'s gang wars after all.

Still, we're confident that the mechanic has been thought through, and as long as they don't pop up at precisely the wrong time (as they always seemed to in *San Andreas*) then we should be okay. *Brotherhood* showed how skillfully Ubisoft

Montreal has combined gameplay elements together, and we're hoping for more of the same here.

Tower defence and the hookblade aside, Ubisoft is taking steps to freshen up the bread and butter of the series: killing. Not that there's anything particularly wrong with the series' execution of this so far, it's just that with the series having transitioned to a yearly cycle it's inevitable that things need shaking up.

Thankfully the devs seem to be on the ball in this regard, especially with the example we saw. A multi-part hit on an important target, security was tight and no amount of rooftop skulking would see us get anywhere near our target. No, what we needed was a plan with a bit of guile to it.

First, Ezio pacifies a minstrel and nicks his outfit, before putting on a show to convince the heavies at the door to let him in. Then, with the rest of his crew infiltrating the building, Ezio has to use his new found minstrel powers to distract guards so that a third party can carry out the deed.

It's not particularly complicated or ingenious, but it makes a nice change from the usual routine of stabbing someone in the back and scurrying

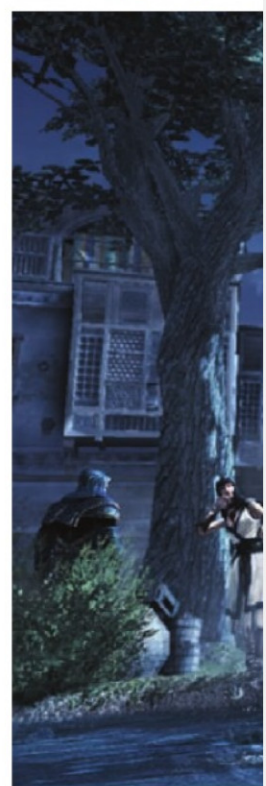
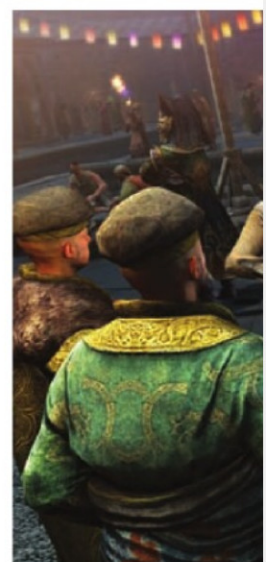
away like a rat off a sinking ship. The fact that someone else performs the hit is also a nice touch, underlining Ezio's standing while also establishing the fact that he is ageing.

Speaking of ageing, early trailers focused on the supposed return of Altair, star of the first game. Obviously the two characters can't actually co-exist in the same timeframe (unless Altair's many accomplishments include finding the secret to eternal life) but we wouldn't be surprised if the two did fight side by side thanks to some shonky narrative contrivance, no doubt featuring the Animus and Desmond (which is the worst name for a hero in videogame history. *Desmond*).

Our demo actually included one of Altair's memory sequences, which take place after the end of the first game. Back in Masayf, the Middle Eastern setting of the original game, we found ourselves running from guards after carrying out a hit on Al Mualim, the former head of the Assassin's Brotherhood. It was a short sequence heavy on platforming, but it was a thrill to be back in that time period. We look forward to seeing how Ezio and Altair's stories intertwine.

Overall, things look good for *Revelations*. As long as Ubisoft keeps things fresh, we could have yet another brilliant slice of historical murder on our hands.

Developer **Ubisoft Montreal** is also responsible for the *Prince of Persia* series.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ Interesting story.
- ❑ Even though one of the leads is called Desmond.
- ❑ But Altair's back, so that's okay.
- ❑ And we'll find out what happens to Ezio.

READ ME

Supposedly the last entry into Ezio's story, we can't wait to see where the series goes from here.



Remember: playing the lute is the perfect distraction. Perfect.

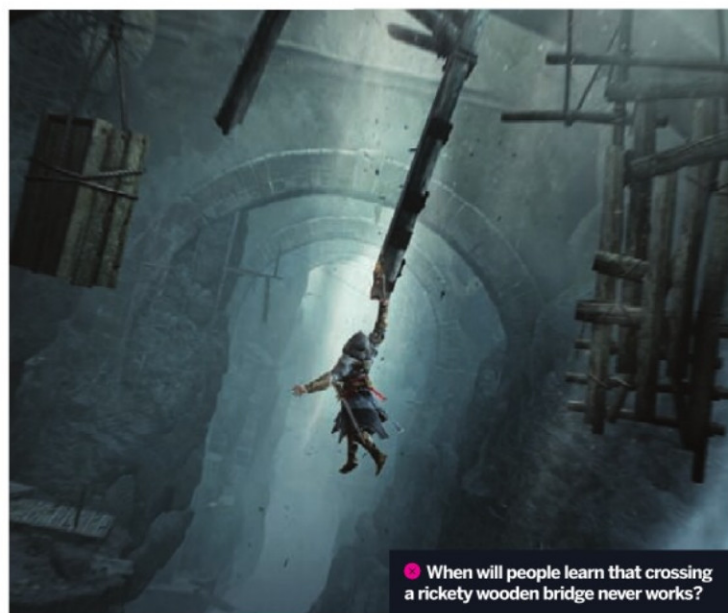


GLOBETROTTING MURDER-FUN

Where next for Assassin's Creed?

WITH EZIO'S STORY wrapping up we're left to speculate where the next *Assassin's Creed* game is going to be set. We'd love a World War II setting, especially as the game's mythology portrays Hitler as a Templar (who is subsequently killed by the Assassins). Won't happen, though, because that's messing with history too much. Everyone knows Hitler escaped to South America.

Britain's Industrial Revolution could be an interesting option, if a little grey, but our money is on another Middle Eastern or African setting for the next game.



When will people learn that crossing a rickety wooden bridge never works?



1

CORPORATE MACHINE

No – literally. You are a corporate machine

The world of the future (ie 2069), with a planet controlled by mega-corporations trading off information and – literally – warring over getting access to the minds of customers. It's every Facebook-hater's wet dream of a story, basically.

We don't know much about the narrative right now – and it's probably not hugely important save for one element. Namely: are we still the bad guys? In the original game your goal was to further corporate interests, nothing else. Will Starbreeze continue with this lack of morality, or will we see Miles Kilo, the player character, uncovering some kind of conspiracy and bringing down his bosses? We sincerely hope it's not the latter.

RELEASE DATE: TBC 2012

Syndicate

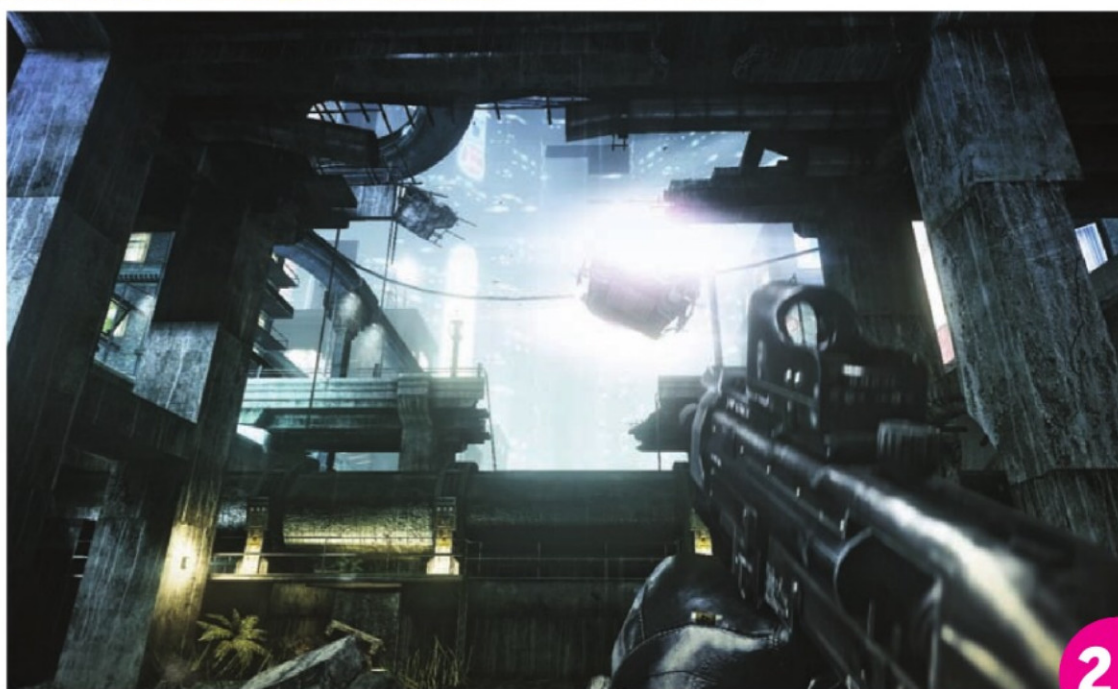
IT'S REAL! What do you mean 'everybody knew anyway'?

PS3

It's been referred to as the worst kept-secret in gaming by quite a few people, but that's for quite a good reason – *Syndicate* is one of the worst-kept secrets in the history of gaming. Pretty much everyone, inside and outside of the games industry, has known of its existence for a long time. Now, though, it's official – *Project Redlime* is no more, and *Syndicate* is on its way direct from the Swedes at Starbreeze as early as the beginning of next year.

But is it time to start getting pumped? While it is utterly glorious that we can now talk openly about the game, it comes with the affliction we're going to call 'X-COM-itis'. A modern update to a classic, beloved title – it's not going to please everyone.

Syndicate is being developed by Starbreeze Studios. Check out www.starbreeze.com for more details.



2

AH, THE PAST

1993 was a long time ago

We'd guess a lot of our readers weren't around for the original two *Syndicates*, so let's give you a heads-up as to why there's some fury about this new game being an FPS. It was once a real-time strategy game from a top-down viewpoint – something popular in what we refer to as 'the

Nineties'. Seems these days those types of games just aren't popular with the masses, and seeing as Starbreeze and EA wants their game to succeed, they're going to present it as something that *is* successful with the masses. Hence, the FPS version is born and fans of the old games blow a gasket. So it goes.

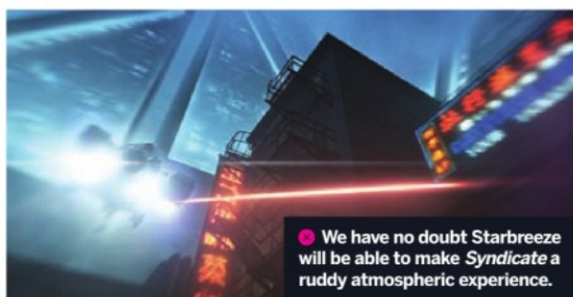
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's *Syndicate*. *SYNDICATE*. If you don't understand, get out.
- Starbreeze is a dev we can rely on for atmospheric gaming fun.
- Four-player co-op sounds like it could be a hoot.
- We're not as negative as The Internet, even if it is an FPS.

READ ME

The original *Syndicate* game was released in 1993 and, according to Ian, is one of the best games ever made. Better listen to him, really.

OTHER STUFF! Some extra random musings, just for the hell of it...



We have no doubt Starbreeze will be able to make *Syndicate* a ruddy atmospheric experience.



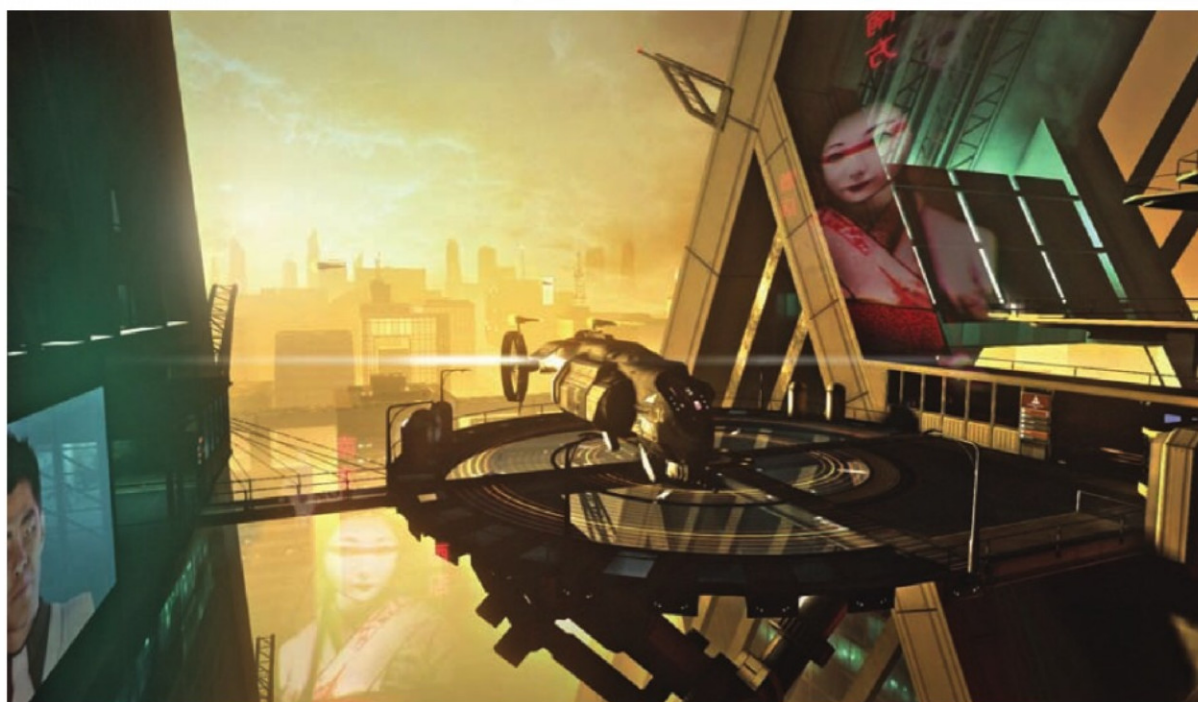
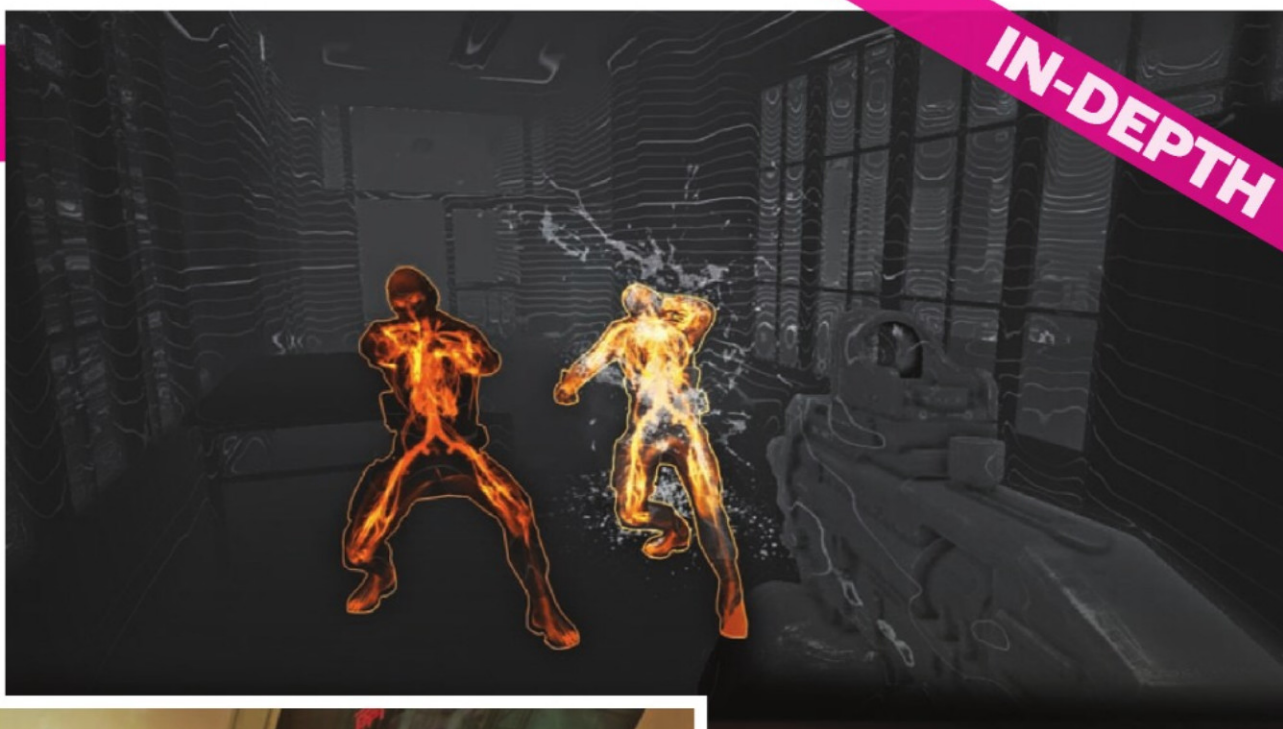
Will it be as out-and-out violent as before? Can you still mow down civilians and incur no penalty?

3

BULLET-TIME TIME

But wait! It makes sense!

As you're playing in the role of a bio-engineered super agent (from the future), it's no surprise to hear you aren't just going to be uzi-ing and minigunning everyone who gets in your way. No, the DART 6 chip implanted in your head allows for some extra, more-than-human powers to help you out. Basically you'll press a button and see through walls, slow down time or 'hack' into an enemy and have them turn on their comrades/ themselves. Ah, bullet-time. But hey – at least it makes sense in the context of the game, rather than just being something hastily crammed in to tick a box, right? *Right?*



4

CO-OP CORP

Work social events are different in the future

With the original games following the joyful (murderous) romping of a group of four super-agents, it might be a bit of a letdown to see the main campaign doesn't have much of the whole 'team' thing to show. Fortunately, Starbreeze isn't stupid – there's a four-player co-op mode available to futuristically butcher people in. Better yet, some – maybe even all – of the missions in multiplayer are reworked versions of missions from the original game. Atlantic Accelerator please thanks bye. Oh, and the one where you end up stealing the armoured car to escape the military compound. And the classic first mission, obviously. And the...

UPGRADING EXPECTATION

R&D in the place to be, do you see?

Once again starting a paragraph with something about the original, just like the original games the *Syndicate* of 2012 includes elements of research and development. Rather than just sticking you with a pistol for the whole game, it sticks you with upgradable weaponry, researchable technology and better-able armour. No word as of yet if the ginger toupees return, but if they don't there will be hell tou-pee. To pay. Because it sounds the same. Yeah? Yeah.

Anywho, research is an integral piece of the *Syndicate* formula – it was never not going to be involved in some way or another – so it's just another bit we're quite happy about. Ah, blind positivity.

5



Atlantic Accelerator? Is it? IS IT?



PREVIEW

✓ Pain to the Max

Taking place eight years after the last game, Max has fallen into an existential funk that would make most teenagers proud. Addicted to alcohol and the series' trademark painkillers, Max is at a low ebb at the start of the game. On the bright side, however, he still has his hair: Part 3 begins with Max still living in New Jersey, still wearing a trench coat, still being a moody git but now considering a move to Brazil for private security work. Before he knows it all hell breaks loose, with mob boss Anthony DeMarco storming Max's apartment building. Shooting his way out in classic *Max Payne* fashion, he decides to head for Brazil, but not before a signature panorama of New York to please series fans.

Max Payne 3 is a collaboration between various Rockstar studios. Check out the official site here: www.rockstargames.com

✓ New & improved

When it comes to offensive capabilities (and we don't just mean that beard), Payne has picked up a few new tricks since we saw him last. While the old classics are still in there – slow-motion diving, weaving through bullets with supernatural grace – Max can now lie prone on the ground to get a better angle for his shots. When killing the last enemy, the brilliant bullet cam (which tracks the flight of the bullet) returns, but now you can speed up or slow down the ballistics for the perfect finishing note.

RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2012

Max Payne 3

Does this new Payne still have the Max factor?

PS3

He's been away for far too long, but Max Payne is finally back on our consoles. After eight years in the wilderness following *The Fall Of Max Payne*, everyone's favourite gurning alcoholic is back. Except that he's not gurning any more. THANKS, GRAPHICS.

Anyway the next step in Max's journey to get messed up and shoot

everything on the planet dead looks to be the darkest yet. Not that we know that, because we haven't actually seen that much to it. It's just safest to assume that when you make yourself look like Charles Bronson you've got some issues to work out. And remember, kids, in videogame land the international sign for 'troubled' is 'having a beard'.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Slow-motion killing.
- Slow-motion walking.
- Slow-motion diving.
- SLOW MOTION.

READ ME

After years in development, it turns out that *Max Payne* isn't dead after all. But can Rockstar successfully take over the reins from Remedy, or will this be a sequel too far?

✓ Down South America way

With New York still wanting him dead, Max heads over to Sao Paulo, Brazil, with friend Raul Passos. Passos reckons that Max can get work as a bodyguard to rich clients, and he duly does: the Branco family, which represent a tangled mixture of personalities: a real-estate mogul, a politician and a low-rent playboy.

It's not long until Max finds himself 'helping' the family out: a shoot-out in a bus depot sees a paramilitary force called Cracha Preto going up against Max, who is attempting to rescue Rodrigo Branco's kidnapped wife. Despite the change in location, this is classic *Max Payne*, filled with slow-motion shoot-outs, set pieces and more bullets fired than in the first Gulf War.

✓ One shot, one kill

In keeping with the cinematic vibe of the franchise, *Max Payne 3* will feature a handful of cinematic moments with strict conditions in place. One saw Max fighting through a rapidly burning office building, attempting to escape. As he did so a soldier appears with a hostage, about to execute one of the family Max is sworn to protect. Time slows to a crawl automatically, and the former cop has one bullet left to kill the assailant before he ices the hostage. It's tense stuff, and we advise that you don't miss. Your employers tend to see 'not protecting someone we pay you to protect' as 'gross misconduct', the old fuddy-duddies.



✗ Max On Fire

We don't want to be Mr Negative around here, but there's no doubting that we're approaching *Max Payne 3* with a sense of trepidation. With the last two games being distinctly 'Remedy' in tone, we're worried that this seemingly more serious Max might be an unwise move. We mean, he's called Max Payne. MAX PAYNE. There's no way this can be played straight up, and the prequels never were, with tongue firmly in cheek. This new *Max Payne* meets *Man On Fire* thing, however, has us worried: it looks good, but can it retain the magic that made the last two so great?

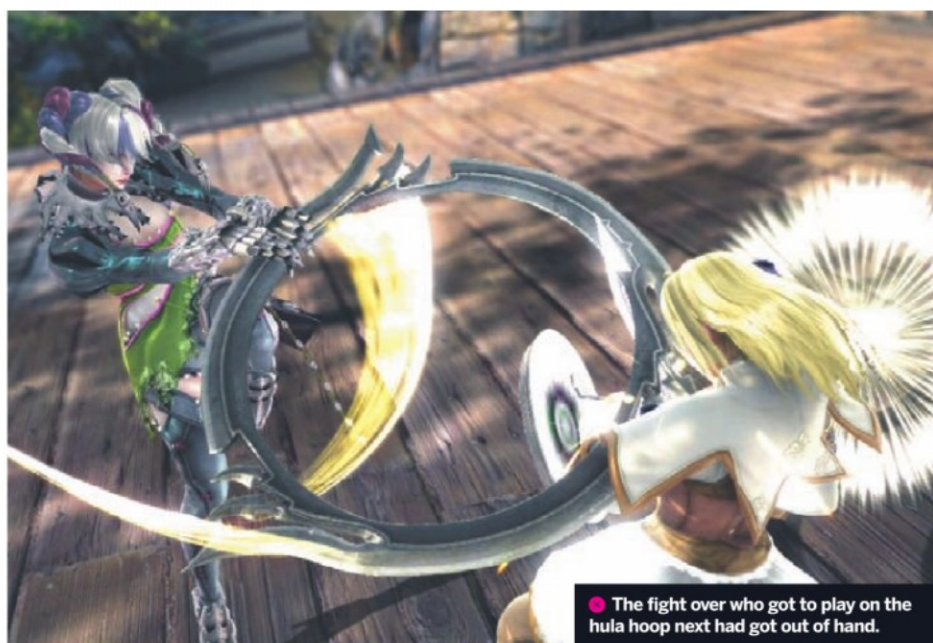
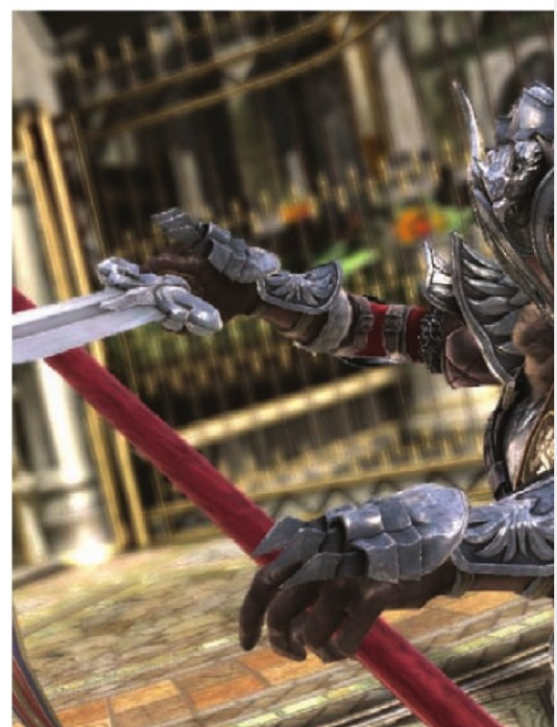


✓ Face Time

Thanks to the restrictions of 'The Past', in the original *Max Payne* the man himself sported a pained facial expression of pure gurning throughout the whole game. It became a cult favourite among fans (and is referenced in *Alan Wake*, also by the developers of the first two games). Sadly times have moved on and Max is now modelled after his voice actor, James McCaffrey. While we can't say that it's not a good decision, there better be an option to change his face, say after you've completed the game. If that doesn't happen...



PREVIEW

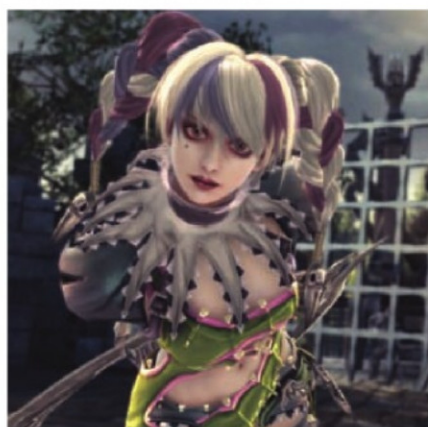


THIS WILL END BADLY

Character creator now enables you to adjust, erm, your assets

SIGH. LET'S JUST get down to it: *Soul Calibur V* lets you increase the volume of specific body parts. Now, Project Soul can pretend all it likes that people aren't going to be using this for making Ivy's breasts even bigger and are actually going to be using it spending their time accurately remaking Sackboy or something. We're onto you, people, and we'll be proven right when this hits shelves. Mark our words.

Still, we're not going to pass judgement on those that partake in such activities, because any game that features images such as this...





Someone should tell Siegfried he needs a bigger sword.

RELEASE DATE: TBA 2012

Soul Calibur V

Come on now, admit it: you're just interested in the boobs. Yes you are



The *Soul Calibur* series needs a reinvention.

There's nothing too wrong with it, per se, but after ten years of swinging swords around and ogling the female characters' ludicrous breasts (yes you do) things might start to get a little stale. In short: when you have to start shoe-horning *Star Wars* characters into your game to generate interest, it's probably not all going to plan.

Fortunate then that developer Project Soul claims that it knows all of this, and that it's taking steps to improve this latest entry into the stage of history.

To be fair, the changes seem rather substantial. Early play suggests that this *Calibur* is faster than previous entries, both in terms of character movement and the pace of the battles themselves. Double-tapping the stick will see fighters quickly dart in that direction, enabling players to close or widen the distance with ease and generally make play that much faster.

Other changes seem even more substantial. *SCIV*'s Critical Finish (which enabled players to end the fight with one killer blow) has been

removed for reasons of balancing and fairness, and Project Soul has introduced a new two-tiered super gauge that it believes will be crucial to the flow of the game.

The gauge will fill during the course of the fight (and can be topped up by taunting via simultaneously pressing the Kick and Guard buttons). This new meter has a substantial effect on play, as it governs the use of two of *Calibur V*'s newest and most important additions.

The first is dubbed 'Critical Edge', a move that will rinse you of one whole super gauge but will enable you to perform a special attack. They're pulled off via a double fireball motion and **R2**, and are spectacular to look at – they're the usual flashy, screen-filling, epilepsy-baiting specials you expect. They're also tailored around your character's play style. So if you've got a fast fighter like newcomer Natsu, then the Critical Edge may be rapid yet not very damaging. Siegfried, on the other hand, will have a slower Critical Edge but it will deal far more damage.

Up next in the revolving carousel of new features is the Brave Edge

system, equivalent to *Street Fighter IV*'s 'EX' moves. These require half a gauge (and some good timing, with a swift tap of **R2** needed after the last move in the string) and each character has three versions. In practice, the Brave Edge system seems perfect for threading in and out of juggles, launchers and combos for that crucial extra damage.

There are also new features on the defensive front. Guarding has undergone a welcome change, with the introduction of the 'Just Guard' mechanic. Hitting guard at a crucial moment will enable you to recover quicker and maybe even sneak in a counter hit while you're there. It doesn't require you to spend from your super gauge, but it does require some skill to pull off, as it should.

The Guard Impact system also returns, re-tuned for this latest outing. It's now tied to the super meter, but is more powerful, knocking opponents to the ground if pulled off correctly.

With the new offensive and defensive features the potential for extremely tactical exchanges is obvious, but Project Soul doesn't want to scare off any potential

players. This new *Soul Calibur* is going to appeal to both technicians and showmen, apparently, with deep fighting backed by high spectacle.

Spectacle which is provided by the laundry list of new and returning faces. Set 17 years after *IV*, *Soul Calibur V* aims to bridge the generation gap by having old and young, mother and child fight with and against each other.

From the old crew, Mitsurugi, Ivy, Voldo, Nightmare Tira, Hilde and Maxi are due to return, along with a stable of new combatants: Z.W.E.I. (who summons a wolf spirit named E.I.N.), Natsu, Taki's ninja apprentice, and Leixia, who wields a Chinese sword and is the daughter of Xianghua. Finally there's Patroklos and Pyrrha, the son and daughter of Sofitia, who form the backbone of the main story arc.

It's too early to call whether this will reinvigorate the *Soul Calibur* series in the way that Project Soul is hoping for, but there's still plenty of development time left and what's already there is looking very promising indeed. With petty annoyances such as the Critical Finish removed and the new additions allegedly deepening the experience while keeping the series trademark flash, *Calibur* fans could be on to a winner.

Project Soul is developing *Soul Calibur V*. Check out www.soulcalibur.com for new details on the game.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Swords. And some bloody impressive swords, too.
- Some incredibly childish character design decisions.
- You can get to work creating your very own characters...
- ...so you can finally find out if Solid Snake is harder than RoboCop.

READ ME

Since its inception, the *Soul Calibur* series has been known for three things: great weapons based fighting, seriously impressive visuals and women wearing very little. Fact.



RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

Sonic Generations

Not a werehog in sight, thankfully

PS3

Well well well, what have we here? A good *Sonic* game? No, that can't be right. After all, *Sonic* has been largely bobbins since forever, especially with all of the bestiality, werehogs and terrible games that PlayStation 3 owners have had to put up with.

No, don't be silly. *Sonic Generations* doesn't look like a good *Sonic* game. It looks like it could be a great one. By taking levels, environments, music and other features from the 2D games and giving them a current-gen sheen, *Generations* plays like how your nostalgia-addled brain always remembers the originals played like: blinding speed, fantastical graphics and excellent level design.

Generations superbly captures the feeling of speed and (crucially) control of the earlier games, and somehow also makes *Sonic* really work in 3D to boot. As is inferred from the title, you'll be playing as both classic and modern Sonic, with the former getting 2D stages and the latter getting 3D versions. Each run through a level will be different depending on which dimension you play it in, and not just in the way you view it: instead of

shoehorning, say, 3D Sonic into 2D levels, each has been carefully laid out to boast overlapping similarities while retaining enough individual elements to make you want to play through it twice.

Racing down the streets of the 'City Escape' stage on Sonic's snowboard is superb in 3D (as it was in *Sonic Adventure 2*), but when flipped to 2D it's equally as engaging yet sufficiently different, with Sonic flying around the stage, chased by a massive, scenery-destroying articulated lorry with nary a control or camera issue in sight. Throw in classic stages such as Green Hill Zone, an interesting hub world that plays like a level from the game and loads of alternative routes through the levels and we're more than confident in saying that *Sonic* is back on form.

It must be said that Sega has really put some thought into *Sonic Generations*, and our hands-on left us with the impression that we might actually be interested in playing a console *Sonic* again. Which, if you played *Sonic The Hedgehog* (2006) will come as some surprise.

Check out Sega's official *Generations* website at www.sega.co.uk/games/sonic-generations for more info.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- 2D Sonic is awesome.
- Good variety of levels on offer.
- 3D Sonic is also pretty good.
- No bestiality as far as we could tell.

READ ME

Sonic Team decides to stop messing around making rubbish *Sonic* games and gives us what we want. Why didn't it think of that before, eh?

Here's some killer whales. And why not, eh?



NOSTALGIA! NOSTALGIA! NOSTALGIA!

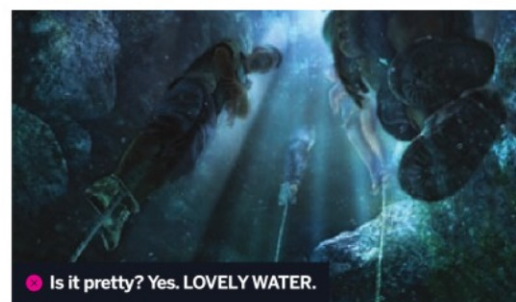


We really can't believe it, but this looks good.



SIDE(KICK) MISSIONS

The team is back, but don't worry **THOSE OF YOU** hoping that Sonic had taken Amy and co out back and shot them will probably be disappointed to hear that they're back, but fortunately their appearances won't be impacting on your enjoyment too much. These sidekicks have thankfully been confined to side-missions, which it must be said are quite enjoyable, with an example being Sonic racing against Tails in his biplane or helping Knuckles burrow for buried coins. It's not mind-blowing, but it's a nice touch.



Is it pretty? Yes. LOVELY WATER.

FREEDOOOOM, ETC

Do what you want. It's what you're best at

SOMETHING WE'RE ALWAYS happy to hear – the basic structure of a *Far Cry 3* mission goes like this: you're given an objective and set loose. That's about it. How you go about completing said objective is up to you. Hopefully we'll be looking at another game to pigeonhole in with the likes of *Deus Ex* as being bloody good fun.



RELEASE DATE: TBC 2012

Far Cry 3

Deus Ex: Hawaiian shirt edition? No. No it isn't

PS3

It's no stretch to admit we haven't been entirely enthusiastic about the prospect of another *Far Cry* title. The last game, while impressive from a technological perspective (and the type of game to make some very committed fans of it), fell flat for us and it just doesn't look like *Far Cry 3* will do things differently enough to pull it out of this pit of apathy it's fallen into.

Or will it? After all, we've had word Ubisoft Montreal is saying it wants to 'avoid the mistakes' of the previous game and make something that appeals to more gamers than last time around. Certainly worrying for those that did foster something of an obsession with 2008's *Serengeti* – 'em-up, but only if you're one of those types that hates and fears all change. As gamers, we know you definitely are. But for the rest of us it can give us hope that this won't be the coma-inducing trudgefest

the last game was. Even if the fire was really nice.

Far Cry 3 returns to a tropical setting not too dissimilar from that of the first game, abandoning the African plains and going back to a world where there's both greenery and water. Players take control of one Jason Brody, a man with a normal-sounding name and – hopefully – an exciting Hawaiian shirt. He has to do some stuff that likely nobody will care about, something about rescuing his girlfriend and escaping from some nasty people – the usual stuff.

It's all up in the air right now. We've been hearing that *Far Cry 3* isn't set for release until late next year, meaning there's lots of time for it to prove itself to us in a more direct way. Once Ubi has *Assassin's Creed* out of the way we're sure it'll start focusing on this bad boy.

Far Cry 3 is being developed by Ubisoft Montreal. Check out <http://far-cry.ubi.com/far-cry-3> for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

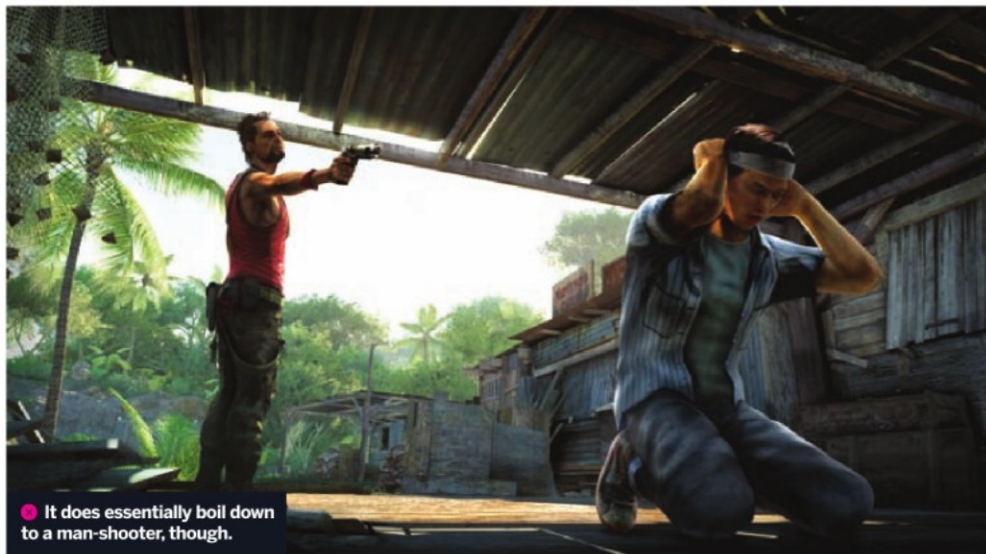
- It takes place in a 'living' world. Which is rather nice.
- It's 'learning from the mistakes' of *Far Cry 2*. Which, too, is nice.
- The water effects are rather spiffy. Which is also nice.
- Freedom. Beautiful, lovely freedom. Which may well be quite nice.

READ ME

The original *Far Cry* was developed not by Ubisoft, but by Crytek, who also developed the *Crysis* games. What a crazy world we live in.



There's a while before it comes out, so let's think about something else in the meantime.



It does essentially boil down to a man-shooter, though.



RELEASE DATE: 28 OCTOBER

Battlefield 3

Field of screams?



Releasing the *Battlefield 3* beta in the state it appeared was a big mistake. EA had planned to use it as a lure to pull in the average gamer – the people that buy *FIFA* and *Call Of Duty* and that's it. Instead of a *COD*-beater, though, what appeared was apparently a broken, buggy mess.

Which is a shame, because going hands-on with the campaign, co-op and multiplayer code reveals that *Battlefield 3* has far more to offer than that sorry showing. Whether it's a *COD*-beater or not will have to wait until next issue's definitive verdict, but so far EA's big hope looks far better than the beta.

What it doesn't look like, however, is the PC version. EA has been banging the graphical drum since January, and it's too harsh to say that the game doesn't look good. It does. It doesn't look great, however: side by side with a PC running top of the line hardware, the PS3 version looks distinctly current-gen, a shinier version of *Bad Company 2* (which isn't a slight: *BC2* looks fantastic). However, those expecting the next generation of shooter graphics will be disappointed.

Those looking forward to a different experience to *Call Of Duty*, however, will be more than pleased with the multiplayer. Granted, team deathmatch is a slog, with the feeling that *BF*'s expansive levels and more difficult learning curve work against it. On the objective-based maps, however, *Battlefield 3* really shines.

We played a selection of maps but the ones that really stood out for us were Operation Firestorm, Caspian Border and Damavand Peak, for the simple reason that they played more like *Battlefield* should: helicopter raids, tank battles, rolling, on-the-fly objectives and the feeling that you're part of a team working to win a war, not just a one-on-one battle.

Damavand Peak was especially impressive. Pushing forward as the attackers in a game of Rush (destroy two objectives to make the defending team fall back) we destroyed the second set of objectives only to be greeted with a thousand-foot drop off the mountain. This is where the attackers spawn, leaving two choices: take a chopper ride down, or base jump off and free-fall down, pulling the parachute at the last minute.

It's exhilarating on attack, but on defence looking up and seeing five or six troops falling out of the sky – helicopter backing them up – is even better. This is where *Battlefield* shines: not one-on-one shooting but in pure scale, the feeling of being a tiny cog in a massive war machine.

No better is this exemplified than in the maps Operation Firestorm and Caspian Border. They are vast and vehicle-filled, with impressive graphical tricks that easily convince that you're part of the war effort. It's in these maps that you see where all the hype is coming from: pitched battles for territory, desperate power grabs for bases and constant air and vehicle support. It's here that the

Flying the jets is a joy, but the levels feel too small for them.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



It's *Battlefield*!



But there doesn't seem to be as much destruction as last time.



And the maps are too small for jets.



AWWWWWW.

best *team* wins: co-ordination, squad use and tactical skill are needed but the best part of it is that after a while these things come naturally.

Sadly, there are a few problems. There's nowhere near the amount of destruction of *BC2*. The map size too is problematic for the newly implemented fighter jets: they simply seem too small for jet-based fighting and you spend most of your time whooshing past your target, turning around and whooshing past again. All told it's great fun but with a few flaws.

Which leaves two other modes: co-op and campaign. Playing through a co-op mission which saw us busting out of a French office building, shooting out through offices, lobbies and finally commandeering a 4x4 to smash out of the underground garage, it was a welcome distraction, but we couldn't help but wish that it was the campaign that was co-op and not just side-missions.

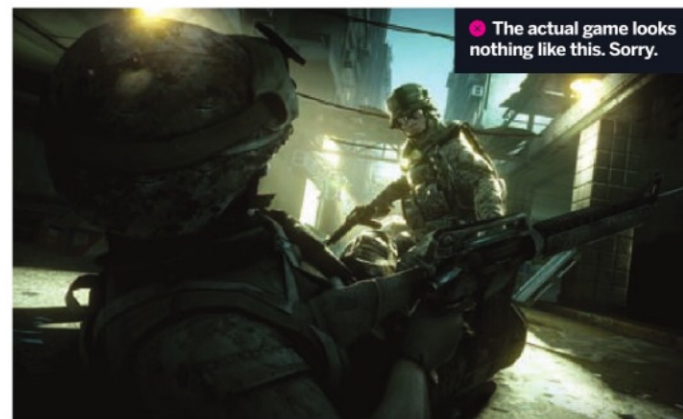
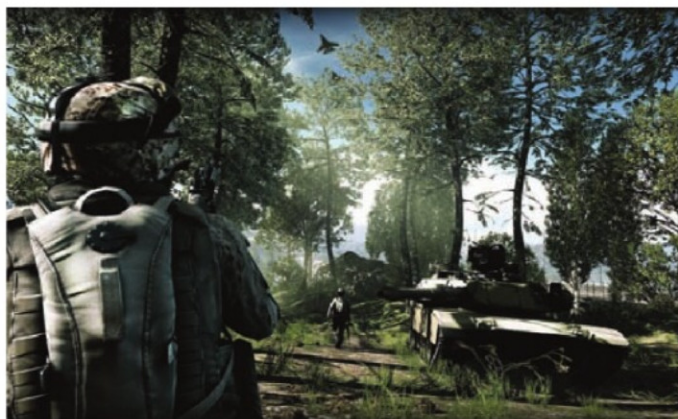
As for the campaign mode, we've seen it all before, and you have, too. Things start with a brutally linear shoot-out through an earthquake-ravaged Middle East, and although it's engaging it doesn't play to the series' strengths and neither do the rest of the missions: co-piloting a fighter jet sounds cool until you realise it's just you looking at some planes and dropping flares, there's *yet another* riff on *COD 4*'s Death From Above mission, and with the story told in flashback by an interrogated marine it's hard not to get serious *Black Ops* vibes from the whole thing.

All things considered we're not convinced that *Battlefield 3* will be a sure-fire classic. Activision must be rubbing its hands with glee.

Check out www.battlefield.com/battlefield3 for more info.

READ ME

Graphically *BF3* isn't the best, no matter what EA might have you believe, but it does have some impressive facial tech similar to *L.A. Noire*'s, dubbed Face Forward.



BATTLELOG VS COD ELITE: FIGHT!

How does BF3's social networking hub stand up to its rival?

BATTLELOG IS BF3'S answer to *COD Elite*, and it has to be said that it's pretty impressive. Taking the form of a browser-based social networking platform, you'll get real-time stats updates across all three versions. You can talk to other *BF3* friends and interact with them much like Facebook, and create 'platoons' of players to fight with. You also have access to a full 'Battle Report' which gives you a rundown of all the stats of your previous match. Great for bragging to your friends.



RELEASE DATE: TBC 2012

Counter-Strike: Global Offensive

A history lesson and a sequel, all in one! Sort of.



You might fall into one of two camps reading this: you're too young to have been there when it got big, or you've just always ignored PC gaming (and, to a lesser extent, Xbox gaming) so it never mattered. Either way you might well have had *Counter-Strike* completely pass you by.

You probably heard about it when Jack Thompson (remember him?) would implicate it in Any Crime Ever Committed. You probably heard a bit about it when you saw something about professional gaming leagues. You'll have seen and heard approximately 22 billion memes about the series all over the interwebs. But how many of us here in PS3 Land have played the *Counter-Strike* series? How many of us care that there's a new one coming?

These are important questions, and – to the latter at least – Valve is hoping the answer is a big fat 'yessum'. This is a new start and a fresh beginning for the first time in years, so it really doesn't matter if you're familiar with the FPS's brand of counterterrorist vs terrorist battles. Though the sooner you get used to hearing 'terrorists win', the better.

So yes, it's another modern day man shooter, but *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* eschews the usual

tacked-on single-player campaign nonsense and sticks with what it's good at. Yes, you can play alone against bots but you absolutely will not be getting the full experience. No, for that you have to travel online to a world of scarily hardcore players and decidedly tactical gaming – at least if previous iterations of the series are anything to go by. Beyond *COD*'s world of super-sprinting stab-happy chappies, *Battlefield*'s team-based battles, *Homefront*'s empty lobbies and ignored deathmatches and *Killzone*'s 'it's the future, it's not meant to be very realistic' bravado, you have the likes of *Counter-Strike*.

Now that's not to say it's on a par with something like *Operation Flashpoint*, or the PC sim-nerd's favourite *ARMA*. *Global Offensive* won't be a celebration and perfect implementation of all things Real Life. But all the same, you're unlikely to be perma-sprinting with your extendo-knife and dropping care packages on the heads of many a noob. No, this is just a hardcore shooter for a hardcore audience – and Valve is being clear in its intentions to keep things how they've always been, drawing the best elements from *Counter-Strike 1.6* and *Source* and keeping the general in-game mechanics the same as always. There's even implementation

of mouse and keyboard controls, so when we're taking on PC and Mac players – thanks to cross-platform play – there will at least be an even playing field. Basically, we'll all be able to point rather than aim. Yeah, take that, mouse and keyboard players – you just got burrrrrned.

This is where we raise some questions, though. Keeping things the same is good, as *CS* is a solid series – it's going to keep the insanely hardcore community happy and it offers a more tactical alternative to the mainstream shooters. But then, this is the first *CS* on PS3 – on *any* PlayStation console. There's little in the way of a pre-existing user base on the Sony console we all love so much (and want to marry), so it's difficult to predict how much of a splash – if any – a new version of a 12-year-old PC (and, sigh, Xbox) series will have.

But that's just a vague worry to highlight, rather than a genuine, easily defined problem. The moment we demand something not get released because it's not quite mainstream enough is the moment we hand in our *Play*-branded fedoras. No, the real issue is: will people even care? It's a risk to release an unproven, PC-centric title like this on console, but it seems that factor has been taken into account. While the minutiae is

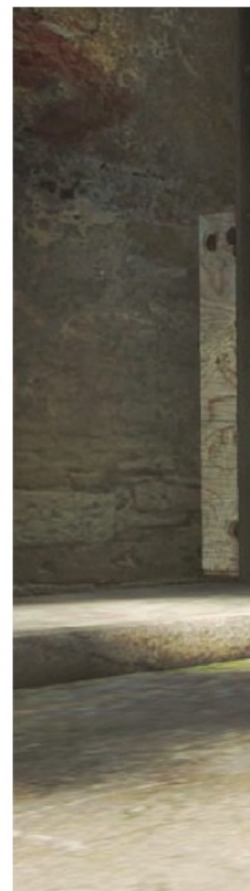


Anyone wanting innovation and imagination: go elsewhere.



still being pored over, it's looking like *Global Offensive* will be a PSN-only release. This could well prove to be a masterstroke; opening the game up to a wider audience by charging less, as well as risking a smaller amount of cash money thanks to lower overheads. Or some business-speak like that. That sounded okay.

Regardless of what we say here, there's definitely potential for *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive*. It's a series with a strong pedigree and you don't get to be one of the most popular online shooters of the last 12 years by being anything other than good. If it can cope with the might of *Modern Warfare 3* and *Battlefield 3* and if it can appeal just enough to the crowd that want something a bit harder it could carve itself a console niche. It's unlikely to match the level of fandom present for the PC version, but it has a chance to make a splash.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- CS is quite the legend in online gaming.
- Mouse and keyboard eff tee doubya.
- Good to see some more competition for *COD*.
- Terrorists win.

READ ME

Counter-Strike initially started life as a mod to the PC version of *Half-Life*. It's good to see the hyphen has survived these last 12 years.

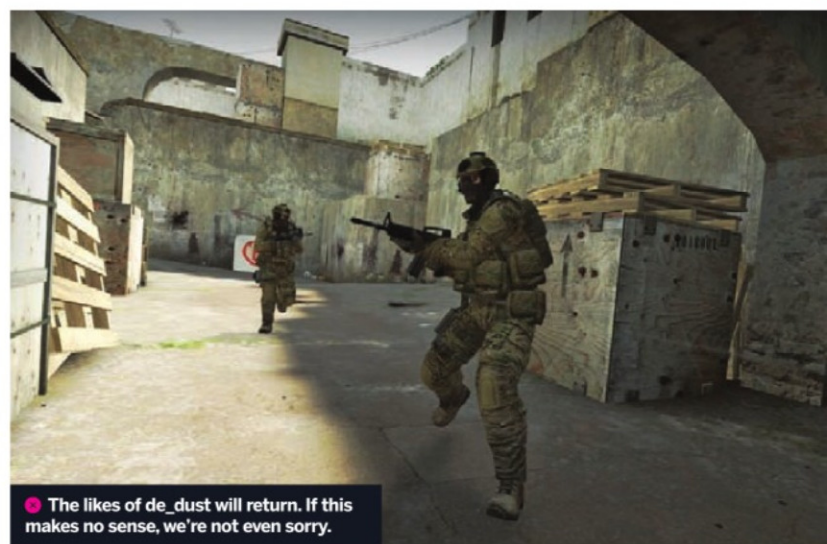
Counter-Strike: Global Offensive is being developed by Valve and Hidden Path Entertainment. Check out www.counter-strike.net for more shooty bangness.



● It's difficult to talk about CS without saying 'hardcore' about 20 times.



● We used to play CS back in '99 as 'casey_ryback'. No lie.



● The likes of de_dust will return. If this makes no sense, we're not even sorry.

CAPITALISM WINS

In case you weren't aware: you buy things!

RATHER THAN KITTING players out with a few weapons and perks they choose beforehand, *Counter-Strike* is a series that relies on the player's love for capitalism. The opening of every round sees a shopping spree where you can purchase guns, grenades, armour, scopes and whatever else you need to counter/terrorise. Do well in a round, be rewarded more cash. Get more cash, buy better guns and trinkets. Buy better guns and trinkets, do better in the game. Do better in the game, get more ca... you get the point. It's unashamed in how it rewards you for doing well, and doesn't look to be changing for *Global Offensive*.

● Yes, it looks like Everything Else. But it'll play well! Maybe.



PREVIEW



UFC UNDISPUTED 3

PUBLISHER: THQ **DEVELOPER:** Yuke's **ETA:** January 2012

PS3 After losing its throne as best MMA game to EA's excellent alternative, Yuke's is back with its shot at redemption. In actuality, however, there's very little competition: with *EA MMA* (probably) dead Yuke's could just show up to claim its place back, at least sales wise.

Thankfully it's looking to change things up, with new evasive moves (or sways) for the ground game, the ability to knock down your opponent via leg kicks, new submissions and new knockout strikes. Some old problems remain, such as the fact that in terms of animations it looks nowhere near as fluid as its competitors, and we're worried that *Undisputed 2009's* stats-nannying campaign mode will make it over as well.

Still, *Undisputed* is still one of the best fighting games out there, and we're looking forward to getting our hands (and feet and elbows) on it.



STREET FIGHTER X TEKKEN

PUBLISHER: Capcom **DEVELOPER:** In-house **ETA:** March

PS3 You thought it would never happen, but it has and we've played it. And yes, it's actually quite good. Who'd have thought it?

Especially surprising was the way that the *Tekken* characters managed to still feel like themselves, despite being drawn (and controlling) like *Street Fighter's*. It takes a bit of getting used to using quarter-circle motions when years of muscle memory has conditioned you to use directional taps, but after a while we got used to it. In some cases it actually makes it easier, especially in the case of King.

Also of note is that the *Street Fighter* projectile attacks don't seem to have unbalanced the game. So it looks like this isn't going to be a grand folly after all, which is a relief because when it was announced we thought that we were in for videogames' AVP moment. In fact, we're now looking forward to *Tekken X Street Fighter*.

THE BEST OF THE REST...



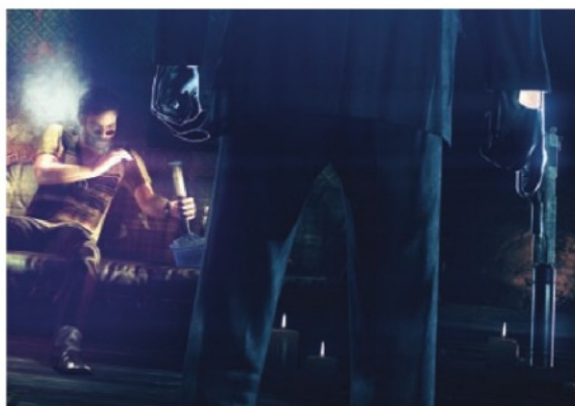
THE DARKNESS II

PUBLISHER: 2K Games **DEVELOPER:** Digital Extremes **ETA:** February 2012

PS3 Ah, *The Darkness II*, continually popping up and teasing us with your good looks and crazy murder, you cad. Anyway, **Play** recently went hands-on with the game and we can report that it's shaping up reaaaaaaal nice.

Controlling Jackie's Demon Arms simultaneously with his actual arms isn't too difficult despite appearances, and the stylish, graphic novel-style visuals make the ultra-violent-murder-fun even more enjoyable. Wait, can we say that? Of course we can, we're **Play**!

Anyway the gatekeepers at 2K Games have promised that it won't be long until more of this excellent-looking sequel breaks cover.



HITMAN ABSOLUTION

PUBLISHER: Square Enix **DEVELOPER:** IO Interactive **ETA:** TBA 2012

PS3 Sigh. We love the videogames industry, we really, really do, but sometimes we become tired of the peek-a-boo attitude.

You know the one: here's our game! NOW YOU CAN'T SEE IT FOR AGES WHILE WE ARTIFICIALLY WHIP UP SOME 'HYPE'!

Really, it just whips up boredom, but we'll let that slide on this occasion, because we can't wait to play the new *Hitman*, what with its new 'instinct' mode that enables you to track enemies more easily if you're a rubbish player, new physics and excellent new graphics engine. This could become one of the biggest games of next year.



FIFA STREET

PUBLISHER: EA **DEVELOPER:** EA Canada **ETA:** Early 2012

PS3 Now that *FIFA 12* is finally out and you've all rushed out and bought yourself a copy (once again), EA's next footballing release to look forward to is its 'Street' edition, which boasts more trickery than King's Cross after 10pm.

Visually, we must admit this looks pretty impressive, with the weirdly deformed caricatures of the previous *FIFA Street* games thankfully banished to the past in favour of more realistic-looking players.

A good start, no doubt, but we're really hoping that the 'fun for five minutes' gameplay of the previous *FIFA Street* entries is a thing of the past as well.

And the best bit? It's got Emile Heskey in it.



I AM ALIVE



PUBLISHER: Ubisoft **DEVELOPER:** Ubisoft Shanghai **ETA:** Q4 2011

I Am Alive is still alive! There's probably a joke in there somewhere, about a game nearly dying, which turned out to be alive, and... hey! Look! It's called *I Am Alive*! But we can't think of any. What are we, clowns? Sigh.

But yes, *I Am Alive* is in fact alive, having been re-announced (Ubisoft's word, not ours) as a PSN title. The central premise is the same, as you pick through the ruins of a world after narrowly surviving something known as 'the event'.

We knew about having to be careful about stamina and resources because we've seen *I Am Legend* and that's taught us everything we know about surviving a post-apocalyptic world, at least until vampire things turn up. What we didn't know is how the combat is based on intimidation, like threatening hostile crowds with an empty gun. Sounds good. And who knows, come release, we may even have thought of that joke.



YAKUZA: DEAD SOULS



PUBLISHER: Sega **DEVELOPER:** Sega **ETA:** TBC 2012

It's been branded *Shenmue*-lite ever since it began, which must be annoying for those who've worked on *Yakuza* for the past six years. Imagine if every time you did homework your teacher went "oooh well done, that's a slightly worse version of Kelly's homework!" and meant it as a compliment. You'd do nothing about it but, you know, inside, you'd be melting with fury.

This might help explain why Sega has gone bonkers and turned it into a zombie-killing spree. Wait. What? On the predictability scale, it's somewhere between making a panda the lead character and having the disc made out of cardboard.

It's clocked up strong reviews in Japan, where it has already been released, and rumour has it that revised controls will feature in its eventual-but-as-yet-unannounced appearance on our shores. We shall have to wait and see.

A delicious platter of games in the future!
Except you can't eat them. Unless your teeth
are really sharp and your gums made of steel



VF5: FINAL SHOWDOWN



PUBLISHER: Sega **DEVELOPER:** Sega-AM2
ETA: Summer 2012

Just in case this news slipped past you, like a wasp that flew at your face and you've now worryingly lost track of, *Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown* is coming to PSN. It's essentially a sequel to *Virtua Fighter 5* in all but number – a stupid amount of new moves, stages, animations and even two new characters. Still no dragon punches, though. Sorry.

WIPEOUT 2048



PUBLISHER: Sony **DEVELOPER:** Studio Liverpool **ETA:** Early 2012

There are only two rules when launching a new Sony console: one, make sure that it breaks down within a year, and two, make sure that *Wipeout* or *Ridge Racer* is on it. Vita has the pleasure of getting both games (we'll reserve judgement about our first point for now), and Studio Liverpool has told us it's aiming for 60fps, but can't guarantee it. Hmmm.

BIRDS OF STEEL



PUBLISHER: Konami **DEVELOPER:** Gaijin Entertainment **ETA:** 2012

Yet another World War II fighter flight simulator, this one – developed by Gaijin Entertainment – has got a nice focus on flying around shooting things dead. Hold on, that's what all of them do, isn't it? Still we must admit we're a bit partial to these things, if only for the inevitable stereotypical voices. Tally ho and pip-pip.

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PLAY Reviews

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Playing bad games so you don't have to

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78 Dark Souls PS3

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96 Phineas And Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension PS3

97 Rage PS3

72 Saints Row: The Third

Guns, girls and gangs explode into life

main review



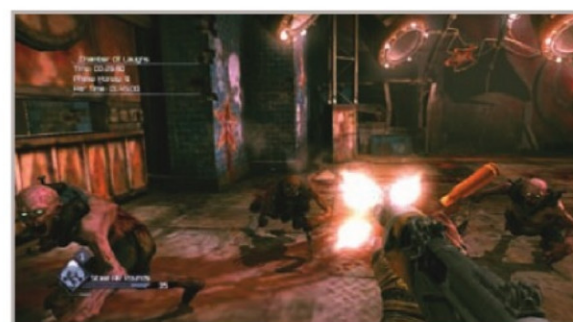
78 Dark Souls PS3

You die over and over and over and...



84 Child Of Eden PS3

Move bolstered by rave FPS! Sort of...



97 Rage PS3

The FPS future or the FPS past?

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RELEASE DATE: 18 NOVEMBER

Saints Row: The Third

"I will never let Burt Reynolds down as long as I live"



Twenty hours spent as a golden, scarred, elfman thing with a tiny penis and a blonde pompadour.

Twenty hours as a gigantic fat man in a cashmere sweater and pink wig (with matching lipstick). Twenty hours as his sister, with a proclivity for making a tosser hand signal at passers-by. Twenty hours skydiving from a hover-bike, hitting pedestrians with flying clotheslines, trafficking ladies of the night with a pimp who uses a voicebox (with autotune always on) and making all of our cars as bright pink as they can be. Twenty hours playing through pastiches of *Tron*, of *GTA*, of the *WWE*, of every Eighties action flick you can think of, of *Red Faction*, videogame tropes in general ("How long until the chopper gets here?" "Oh, about two waves of SWAT guys") – even a pisstake of *Saints Row*. If you were to ask us what we wanted to spend 20 hours doing while playing a game, we'd have to say a lot of these things would pop up on the list. *Saints Row: The Third* shows Volition has gone into our very minds and extracted the dumbest, most puerile and silly elements of What We Want To See and cobbled them together in one of the most stupidly fun games of the year – even if it is all still a little rough around the edges.

Laying out the point – the motivation – behind your actions in *SR3* is a bit of a pointless exercise. On paper, at least. See, this weak skeleton backing up the whole game – you're in a new city, with new enemies: go forth and do your Gang Stuff – is actually perfect for purpose. Later in the game when you see the amount of ludicrous elements ladled liberally on top of this original, weak skeleton of a story: that's when you see it's fit for purpose. When you see the Saints have their own line of energy drink, or people will ask you to pose for them in a photo just after you've slaughtered 50 rival gang members, or how the problem of gang violence is countered with an army – literally – *that's* when you realise a weak backing tale is all *SR3* ever needed. That, and Hulk Hogan, obviously.



DETAILS

Publisher
THQ
Developer
Volition, Inc
Price
£49.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Sandbox
Age Rating
18
Website
www.saintsrow.com
Twitter
@SaintsRow
Facebook
www.facebook.com/SaintsRow



At the same time, *SR3* is very much your own story to tell. We don't mean in the sense you have real power over the direction of the narrative – bar a handful of decisions your contribution is predetermined, so it's not like that's a very personal tale. But it's still a sandbox game, and it's one where not only are you able to dick about – you're actively rewarded for it – so it's only natural that the small stories, made yourself, start to pop up all over the place. From the simple ones where you were in a pitched battle with law enforcement only to see a Luchardores brute run in and head-butt an APC over a bunch of cars, to the more... wait, what? Yes, that did indeed happen. Skydiving from a hover-bike

into a swimming pool, just because you can. Taking out a group of unruly mascots, dressed as hot dogs, giant cuddly toys and Jonny Gat, using an attack chopper before making your escape on a half-wrecked scooter. Beating old women to death with a giant purple dildo

Anyone saying *SR3* is a perfect game is obviously a bit wrong in the head

– though we suppose that's one of the main marketing points for the game, so it's not like you won't have thought of it. Basically there's a lot you can do in the space between missions, side missions and activities.

Thanks to the Awesome Button™, the simple act of running about beating people



Not pictured: Hulk Hogan or Sasha Grey. Don't Google her.

Or you could try



Grand Theft Auto IV Issue 166
Undoubtedly the grander achievement, but entirely lacking a tongue lodged in cheek. **98%**



• This is quite likely to be the least ridiculous image of the game you'll find.

Saints Row: The Third



up and jacking cars (don't let a *Daily Mail* reader see that sentence) is approximately 1.2 billion times better. We've talked about it before, but for those who aren't aware: holding the sprint button makes it so activities you perform are faster and, well, more awesome. Flying clotheslines, surfing on people's backs, ignoring the whole 'door' thing and going straight through the windscreen of a car – it all just makes the experience both a lot faster and a lot funnier. Sure, it gets to the point where you're ignoring what's actually going on, after being desensitised to all the dick punches in the world, but even when it's lost the shock or comedy value it's still a useful mechanic in the game. Speeding up the act of getting in a car: a Good Thing.

In case you're still wondering, *Saints Row: The Third* is a sandbox game – the open world of Steelport is laid out in front of you to explore, blow up and hit people with massive purple dildos in. Think *GTA* back when it had a sense of humour and you're very much on the right tracks. But this is a game, unlike many other open-world titles, where the main story missions are actually the biggest draw. You won't see any 'ferry this from A-to-B' bits thrown in, and while at some points you will feel a bit bogged down with too many quick, throwaway side-mission tutorials masquerading as real tasks, generally >



• Upgrading this little shotgun chappie is one of the best things you can do, really.

MERRY MELODIES

This is music use done right

IT DOESN'T HAVE as vast or obscure a musical selection as the *GTA* series is famed for, but *Saints Row: The Third* does use the music it has to fantastic effect. From characters singing along to the radio (even if you choose the zombie voice) to the way epic Eighties tracks kick in just as you're about to do some heroic deeds on a few missions – it's cleverly done, funny and best of all doesn't feel forced. Plus any game featuring Tim & Eric's *Sports* automatically gets a place in *Play's* Awesome Book.





TOO LONG; DIDN'T READ

Six pages of words too much?
Try this quick guide

Story

The Saints have ended up in Steelport and... well, it's pretty irrelevant. It's all just a skeleton with which Volition can put layer upon layer of stupid awesomeness on top. Dismiss it as 'generic gangsta bullshit' at your own peril.

Weapons

Yes, and lots of them. Pistols that can be upgraded to fire explosive (hilarious) bullets, computers to call in air strikes, lasers, rockets, sonic booms, grenades and, yes, that massive purple dildo you've seen everywhere.

Vehicles

Plenty of transport is provided through *Saints Row 3* and it ranges from basic (Smart Car) to... less basic (Professor Genki's People Cannon). You can have fun in everything you drive, though.

Star Power

The power of celebrity isn't as strong as in, say, that other game called *GTA*. Still, *Saints Row: The Third* does have Hulk Hogan in it, which is brilliant, and Sasha Grey, which is brilliant in a different way that you should not Google.

GSOH

Much has been made of the anarchic silliness behind *SR3* and that's with good reason: it's genuinely funny. Uplifting, lighthearted and willing to poke fun at anything and everything, especially itself. It's a breath of fresh air, no doubt about that.

Multiplayer

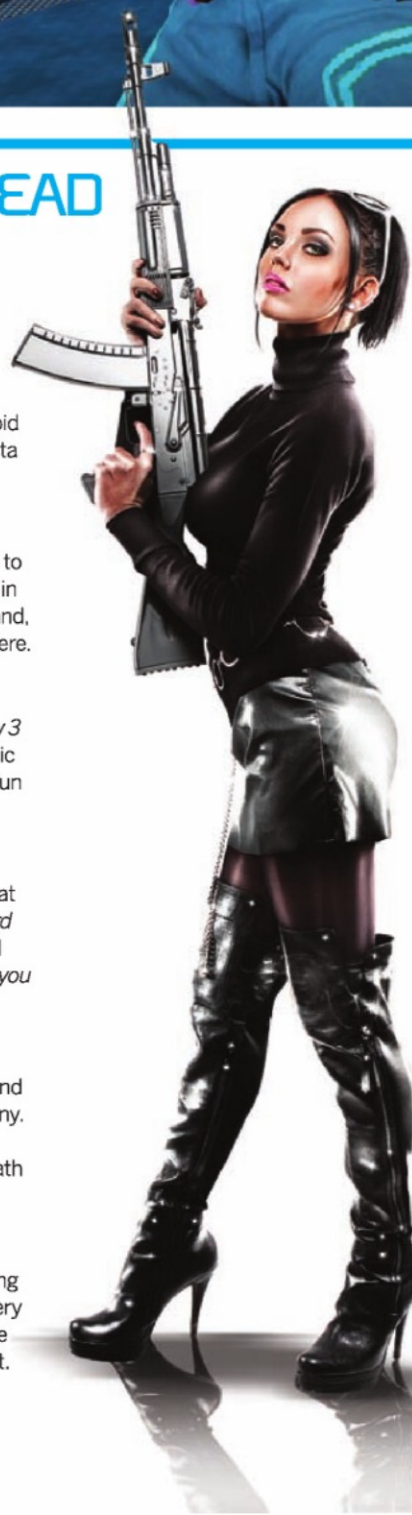
Standard MP has been killed off in favour of allowing players to go through the whole game in co-op. Every mission can be played with someone else and the whole thing's been built with that in mind. Brilliant.

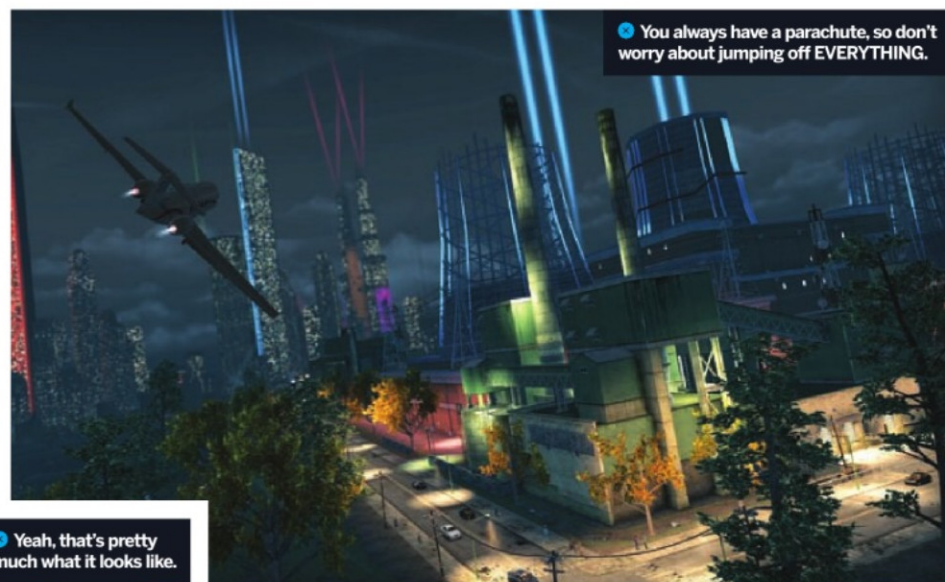
➤ speaking the main game is always interesting and inventive. And shooty. Very shooty.

We obviously don't want to ruin the experience for you, as part of *SR3*'s charm is the way it comes out with these things and just hits you in the face with a surprise, often leaving a stupid grin on your feckless maw. If you've seen any of the plentiful trailers for the game you know what's in it, but what's still surprising is how much of it you do actually play – the *Tron* section, for example, has more different types of game in it than the vast majority of major releases these days. Alright, so that's an unfair comparison as these light cycle sections and other, miscellaneous bits we're not going to directly mention, are only brief, but it's an inventiveness and 'anything goes' attitude that endears the Saints and their murderous adventures to us like never before. If it's been in any other game, there's probably an element of it in *Saints Row: The Third*: survival horror, racing, action, adventure, dancing – even going back to certain styles and genres we haven't seen much of since the Eighties. In fact, this particular decade is one the game seems to want to go back to constantly – and that's no bad thing (see Merry Melodies boxout).

It's strangely refreshing to say, but *SR3*'s main draw is its story missions – and that's something we don't often see with large, sandbox games. This does mean the secondary activities are quite throwaway and repetitive, but the fact the main game is such a draw and keeps ramping it up throughout means it matters little that the window dressing isn't amazing.

In fact, we found the whole attitude of the game summed up in one cut-scene. Killbane, leader of the Luchadores wrestling gang, states in a matter-of-fact fashion: "We don't do a run-in: we hit 'em with a Montreal Screwjob." This shows a willingness to not only know about wrestling and still show your face in public, but a desire to put that reference – known around the world but still niche – into your game. It shows an attitude of 'if we can





put it in, put it in' and this resonates through most of the main campaign. We'd be lying if we said all of it, and there are a fair few missions – especially early on – that serve as little more than training for the plethora of side-quests. But they are useful and mercifully short, and once they're done with you can get into the real meat of the experience: dressing up like a complete idiot (with a tiny penis)

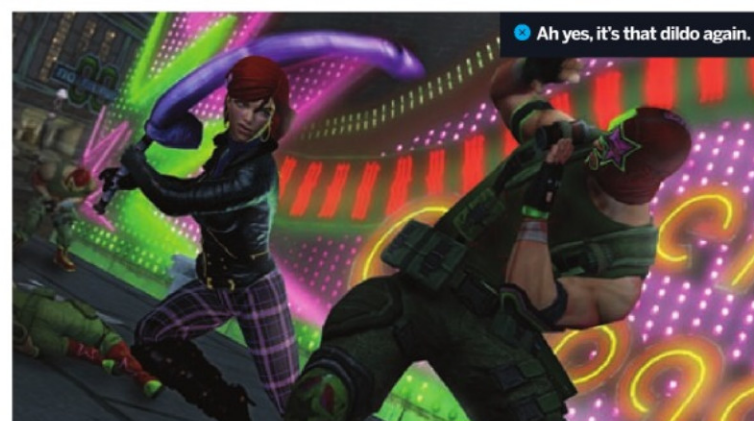
and chauffeuring a tiger around the city. Or causing numerous wrestlers to die in mysterious 'accidents'. Or listening to Sasha Grey act in a way you've never heard her act before (probably best if you don't Google her). Or laughing, laughing and laughing some more as you stab , the dedicated dick punch button. It's not like the story really matters or that the campaign is gripping enough to change your life in any way, but it is entertaining, inventive and exciting – at least most of the time. You still won't enjoy it if you're expecting a perfectly polished piece of mature entertainment, mind.

It's an inventiveness and 'anything goes' attitude that endears the Saints and their murderous adventures to us like never before

Dozens of side missions are available to waste even more of your time on, unsurprisingly. If you've played *Saints Row 2* then you have seen most of them – heli assault, snatch, that kind of thing – but if you haven't played the last game they will at least draw your attention for a while. None seem as

maddeningly addictive as Professor Genki's Super Ethical Reality Climax, though, where the trap-laden shooting gallery reminds us somewhat of *The Club* – a bit of a cult classic combo-based shooter. Handily, the shooting is solid, accurate and easy to control, lending itself perfectly to the speed runs through Genki's warehouse of electrified walls and gun-toting beer bottles (but don't shoot the panda).

Generally, they're nothing more than a bit of an extra on top of everything else, and it is a shame that so many side-mission archetypes simply return, unchanged, from the last *Saints Row* game. But the activities >

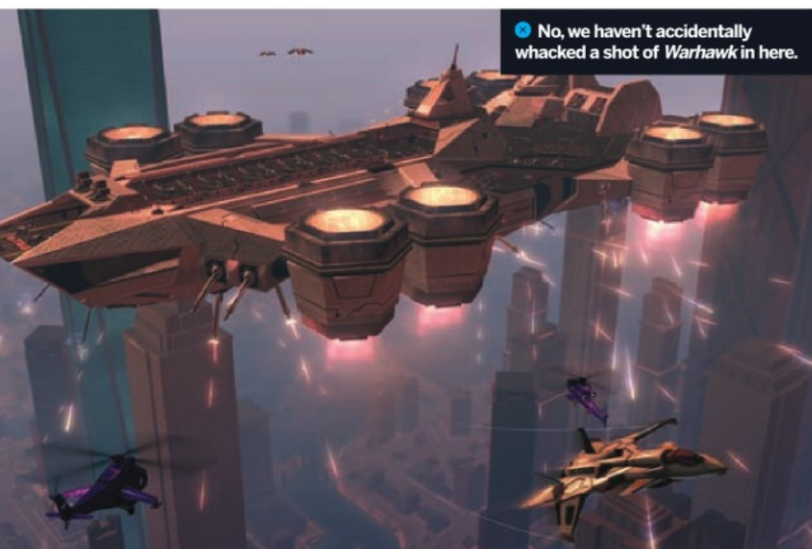


➤ outside the main missions do offer a welcome change of pace and can sometimes tap right into the compulsive part of the brain that makes you simply *have* to finish them all. Just like a good collection of side missions should do then, really.

Accompanying you on your journey of ridiculousness is a fine arsenal of wonderful toys. Now, we've all seen The Penetrator – the giant, floppy, purple dildo. That's old news. We're above that kind of thing now, and it definitely doesn't still make us laugh in a pathetic fashion *every single time*, no siree, not us... But there's other powerful paraphernalia to thwack, blast and twock people, places and things with. The humble submachine gun is ever-present and as with most weapons is upgradable, but the real interest comes from the laser weapons, Professor Genki's Octopuss Cannon, the MegaMan blaster and the other weird and

wonderful gizmos you can get your hands on. Fancy calling in air support? Yeah, why not. Want explosive bullets in your dual-wield pistols that are as big as your torso? You should probably do that (seriously – they're really rather powerful). Need something to incapacitate those who would stand against you? Try lobbing a fart in a jar. But it doesn't stop with the blast and boom sticks you hold in your emerald-skin hands.

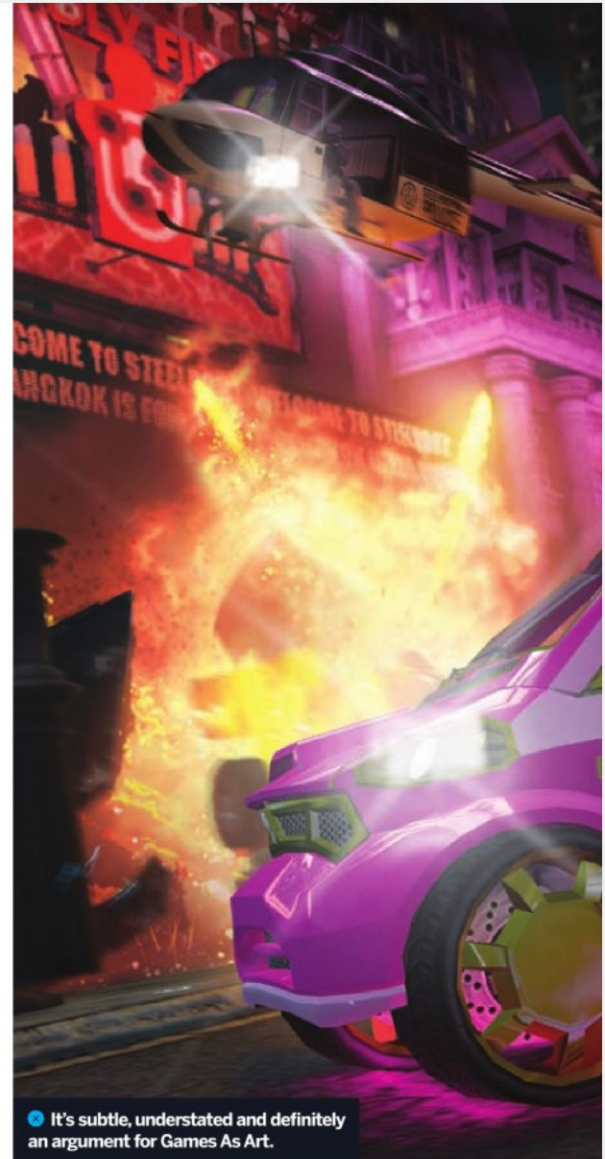
No, the vehicles also run the gamut, from your Smart Car clones to your fancy drop-top roller skates. From a STAG APC to that hover-bike we just can't shut up about. From a tank to a slightly better tank (and onto a slightly more 8-bit tank). You can very much be the bringer of death from above, below and any side with the vehicular options available. Handling of each isn't what we would call 'realistic', but it doesn't take much getting used to and, in most cases, serves the experience far better than an accurate portrayal of front-wheel drive understeer would. Remember to be liberal with the handbrake use and you'll have a blast motoring around Steelport. Or if you're in the sky, just remember that your laser blaster in the VTOL should be referred to as The Harbinger Of Glorious Light, or something equally dumb you come up with yourselves. What we're trying to say is: just like a lot of the game, it's a lot of fun messing about in vehicles. Imperfect, true – sometimes you will hit an invisible obstacle, or idiot cars will pull out in front of you because they're *idiots* (idiots), but you work around these minor irritations, fly off in a helicopter and bring Minigun death to all those that oppose you. As well as a bunch that don't, just for a laugh.



❖ No, we haven't accidentally whacked a shot of *Warhawk* in here.



❖ The Saints are, as it turns out, a bunch of massive sellouts.



❖ It's subtle, understated and definitely an argument for Games As Art.

There are arguments – justifiable arguments – to be made in criticism of *Saints Row: The Third*. It still looks rough around the edges, there are still issues with clipping and pop-up and things you would hope to be ironed out by now. Side missions bring little new beyond what was offered in the last game, the driving is more loose than realistic and there are some battles that devolve into simply running away, turning around, shooting, running away again thanks to the irritating way in which larger enemies charge you. The licensed music – while often used very well indeed as a comedy/Eighties action film tool (no game has ever made us feel more like Johnny 5, ever) – isn't as eclectic or plentiful as it maybe could have been. Anyone saying *SR3* is a perfect game is obviously a bit wrong in the head, because it demonstrably isn't. It's home to too many smaller issues to be ignored – none are big enough to ruin enjoyment, but when you see *another* road sign get lodged in the middle of a car thanks to dodgy clipping you do start to wonder if a bit of polish would be out of the question. Generally speaking it pales in comparison to the main competition – that which it will be endlessly compared to – *Grand Theft Auto IV*, at least from a presentation and polish perspective.

But anyone saying *SR3* is anything other than a brilliant example of what happens when you let a videogame simply *be* a videogame – well, that's when they've gone too far. We're not saying you should ignore a game's faults, we're just saying it's easy to ignore the minor issues that crop up with *Saints Row: The Third*. That might sound





Saints Row: The Third

COMPARE-O-TRON 9000

How do the Saints compare to other open-world fare?



Grand Theft Auto IV

Astounding polish and epic scale, but lacks real humour. No Awesome Button.



GTA (pre-IV)

More humour and more of a cartoon world. Pioneered giant dildos as weapons. No Awesome Button.



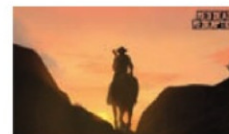
Mafia II

More naked breasts, less out and out fun and ridiculousness. No Awesome Button.



The Saboteur

The game you all completely forgot exists is not that great. No Awesome Button.



Red Dead Redemption

Red Dead replaces cars with horses and humour with no humour. No Awesome Button



Driver: San Francisco

Stay in your car as this is dull. Not a patch on Saints Row 3. No Awesome Button.



Just Cause 2

Rewards dicking about almost as much as Saints Row 3. Larger scale. Poorer main campaign. No Awesome Button.



True Crime: Streets Of LA

Shoddy around the edges but quite good fun, sort of like Saints Row 3. No Awesome Button



The Elder Scrolls

Nothing like it and definitely no giant dildos. No Awesome Button



like a cop-out – it might sound apologetic or like it's there to preemptively counter criticism the game is inevitably going to get and, well, it is. But it deserves that very defence for one very good reason: it's just so much fun. *SR3* absolutely does not take itself seriously – the phrase 'anything can happen, and probably will' is a terrible, overused one, but we're happy to use it here. The sense of escalation – from running hos to taking on a military superweapon – the genuine swerves you don't expect, from wrestling the world champion to controlling a toilet (no, really)... the fact of who the mayor is (something we're not going to spoil for you, because it's brilliant)... it all comes together in such a ludicrous, enjoyable way that it's impossible to do anything but love *Saints Row: The Third*.

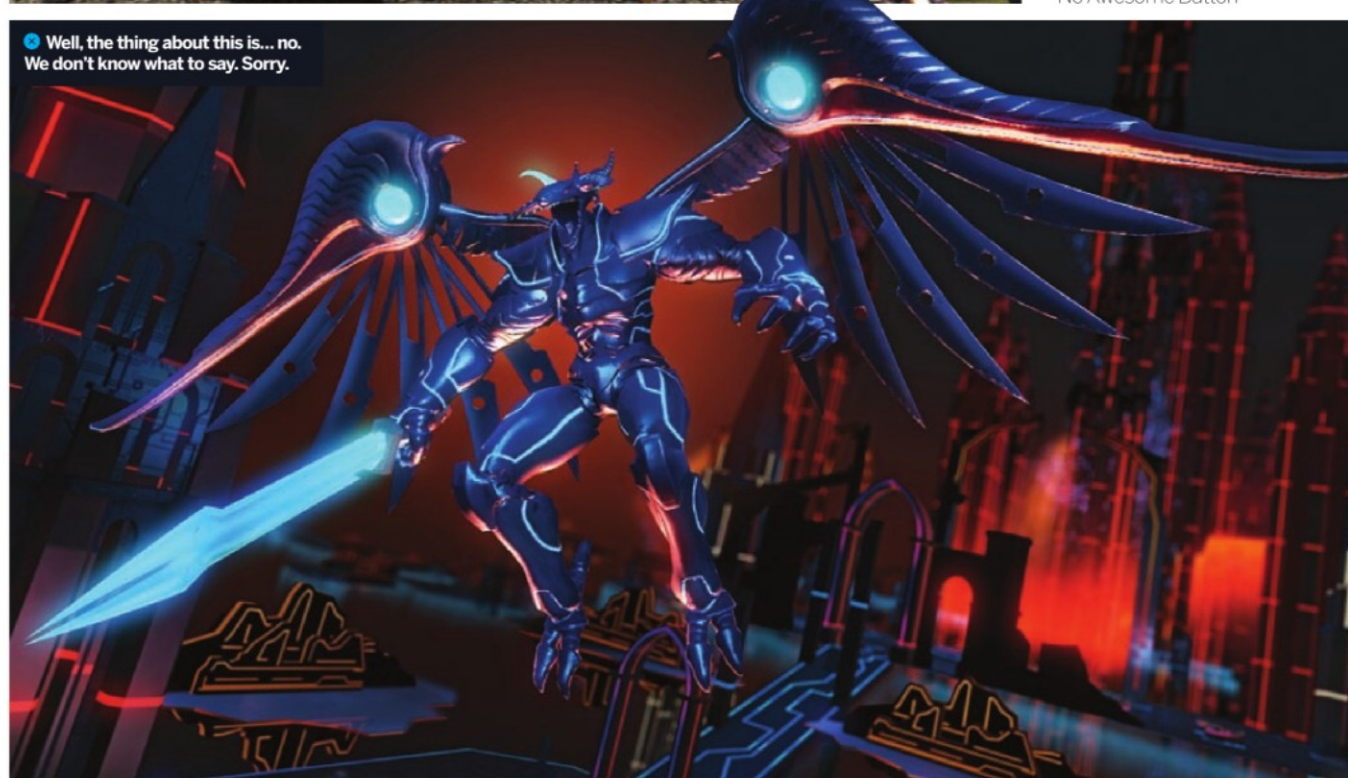
Yes, it can annoy. Yes, it's sometimes very rough around the edges. Yes, it's puerile, and the humour and general style will fall flat with some. But it's so utterly wanton and there's such a feeling that Volition had a ball making the game that you'd only be proving to the world you have no soul if you don't get along with it. Just so long as you always bear in mind – it's not big, and it's not clever.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

It has its issues, it has its drawbacks, but *Saints Row: The Third* is an utterly wanton, totally ridiculous bag of laughs. It's difficult to dislike anyway, and even harder to dislike with such an enjoyable, escalatory campaign. Great stuff.

88%



Well, the thing about this is... no. We don't know what to say. Sorry.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Dark Souls

Today is a good day to die



DETAILS

Publisher
Namco Bandai
Developer
From Software
Price
£49.99
Players
1-2
Genre
RPG
Age Rating
16
Website
preparetodie.com
Twitter
@Filthierich
Facebook
facebook.com/darksouls



It takes a certain type of person to get a kick out of something so crushing, so oppressive and so downright sadistic as *Dark Souls*. The kind of person who could happily lose over and over to a more skilled opponent in *Virtua Fighter* in the name of simply improving little by little; the kind of person who always disables tutorials and tips when starting a new game; the kind of person that would gladly delete their *Skyrim* save and start over should their character kick the proverbial bucket. Going into *Dark Souls* without an iron will, the patience of a saint and a ready acceptance of the fact that the odds are stacked against you from the off is gaming suicide – you may as well just chuck your balls and your sanity in a jiffy bag and post them off to From Software

Losing several thousand souls is absolutely gutting but with so many ways to die, it's pretty much inevitable

is you even consider going in unprepared. Don't actually do that though, obviously.

You're probably wondering, then, just how we can justify recommending a game so unfair as this. And that's precisely the point – *Dark Souls* is seldom, perhaps even never unfair. It's cruel, sure, and it wants you dead more than just about any other game you'll ever play. But whatever it throws at you, there's always a way to come out on top. Be

Cor blimey, guv! Stone the crows! Actually, no, wait. Shoot fire at the crows!



it running off to improve your gear before returning to the problem area, learning to spot windows in enemy attack patterns or simply mastering the basic combat controls until your dodge rolls and parries are perfect, the route to victory is gruelling but all the more rewarding for it.

It doesn't help that the game's open world structure and lack of signposting means it can be easy to stumble into a near-impossible area where the first warning sign is a giant sword caving in your skull and killing you instantly. In an age when games are generally designed to be as accessible as possible, *Dark Souls* is a grim

breath of fresh air. Where other games hold your hand from start to finish, From Software's latest instead looks at your outstretched hand in disgust, turns up its nose and punches you in the face. Over and over and over again. They're the ones setting you the monumental challenge at hand, after all – having them then help you through it would be like newspapers printing crosswords and Sudoku puzzles that had already been filled in for you.

Learning how to defend yourself is essential to surviving at all.



Slowly but surely, the lay of the land becomes second nature. Exploration will often uncover shortcuts, alternative routes and connections between the many areas and it won't take long to isolate and avoid the death-trap areas while finding a levelling spot that works for you. Souls are the universal currency of *Dark Souls*, acting as both money and experience for pretty much everything in the game. Just like in *Demon's Souls*, these can be stockpiled to your heart's content but should you die (and you will), you drop the lot. If you can make it back to your corpse, all your goodies can be reclaimed but if not... yeah, that's all gone forever. Losing several thousand souls in this way is absolutely gutting but with so many ways to die, it's pretty much inevitable. With your soul wallet empty, though, it makes it far less stressful to just get out and explore – with nothing

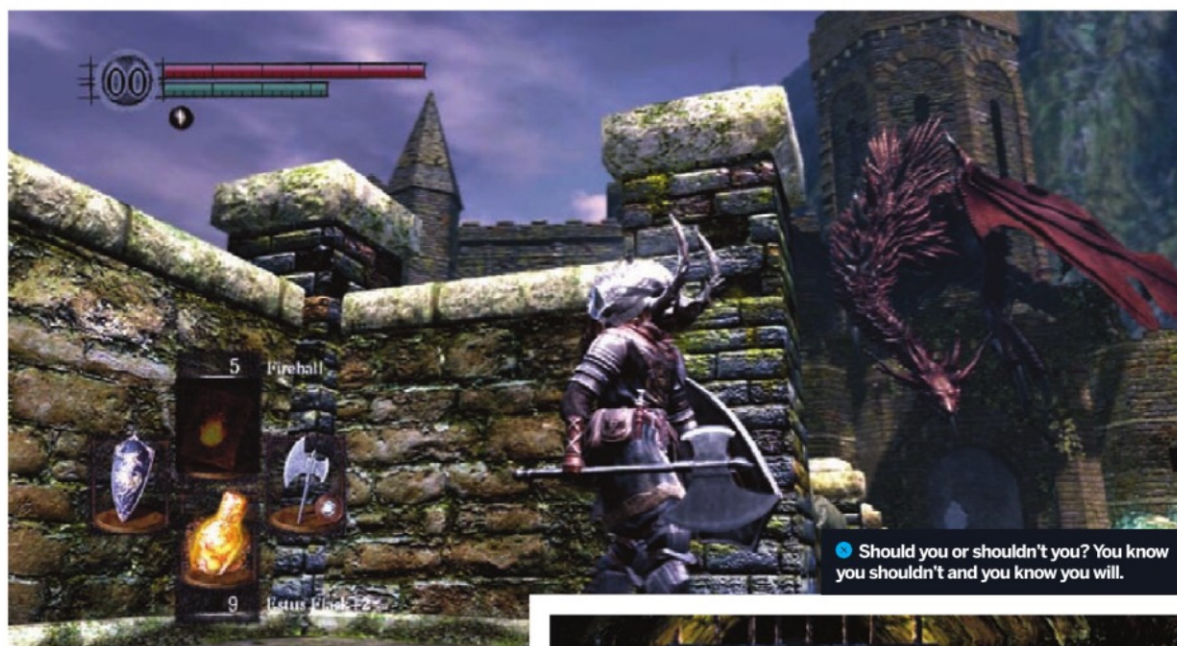


DIRTY PRETTY THINGS

The devil's in the detail, after all

IT'S EASY TO overlook a lot of *Dark Souls*' nuances and ingenious design decisions, though they're integral to the game's overall appeal. The way you can equip gear that you're not quite skilled enough to use just yet; the way exploration and curiosity can lead you to find example of the game breaking its own rules; the way the same tricks and traps used to punish the player can be used on monsters, too... there are so many such elements and each adds to the quality, though many you may not even notice at first, if at all.



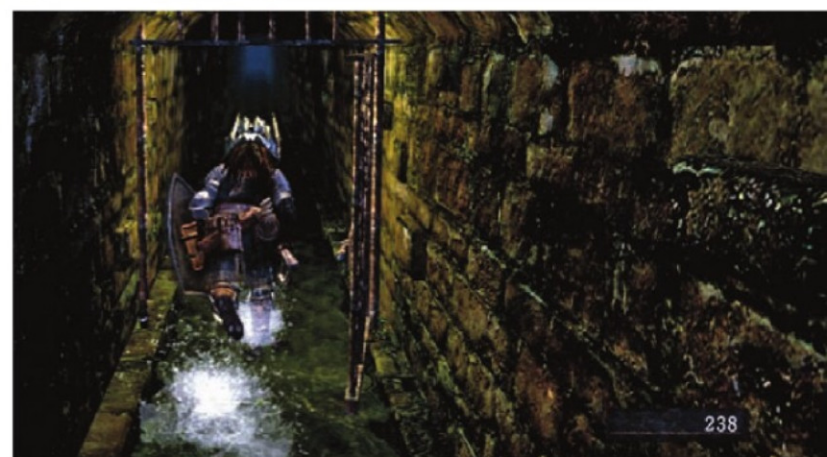


to really lose, suicide runs into impossible places to grab some sweet gear become a valid strategy and testing the water gets ever harder as your soul balance slowly creeps up.

Luckily then, there's no shortage of things on which to spend your fickle currency, much of it only possible when you find and activate a bonfire. These camp fires are as close to checkpoints as *Dark Souls* will allow, rest areas which restock potion supplies and spell uses but there's a catch – of course there is – and resting also allows all enemies (bar bosses and mini-bosses) to respawn. Still, while chilling by the fire, souls can be poured into each of your stats to grow your character as you see fit. Early doors it's easy to boost several levels in one go but as the cost spirals later on, it can take hours just to earn enough souls to boost a single stat by one. Select NPCs scattered around the

game can also sell you goodies, from ammo and accessories to class-specific gear and abilities. A word of warning, though - try not to accidentally hit a friendly character if you value your shops. If they get angry, you'll be forced to kill them and although this does net you a fair few souls, losing access to some of the stores could make aspects and areas of the game nigh impossible. Well, even more nigh impossible.

But *Dark Souls* never tells you this. It barely tells you anything at all, actually. It's one big voyage of discovery, one reliant on first-hand experience and trial and error (with a lot of the latter) rather than advice and explanations. Just as in *Demon's Souls*, it's possible for players to leave messages for one another but where these mislead as often as they help out, it can be hard to know which of these to heed and which to ignore. Far more >





> useful are the bloodstains that paint the land, each one all that remains of some brave soul or another that died in that spot. Checking these will even show a ghostly replay of how the unfortunate sap met their end, a perfect indication of impending danger and one that's far harder to abuse than the often cruel message system.

Those that prefer more direct interaction with other players will be pleased to hear that *Dark Souls* offers such functionality in a pair of flavours. The first is co-operative play, allowing you to jump into another hero's world and lend a much-needed helping hand. Even when not directly co-operating with someone else, nearby players can still be aided by your actions – certain spells have a resonance effect that can heal or buff others in the vicinity while kindling a camp fire gives everyone around it a healing boost. On the other end of the spectrum is the ability to invade another player's game, with rewards up for grabs if you can successfully murder



If so much of *Dark Souls* is an intimidating, imposing tour of obscene difficulty and abject horror, when exactly does the fun start?

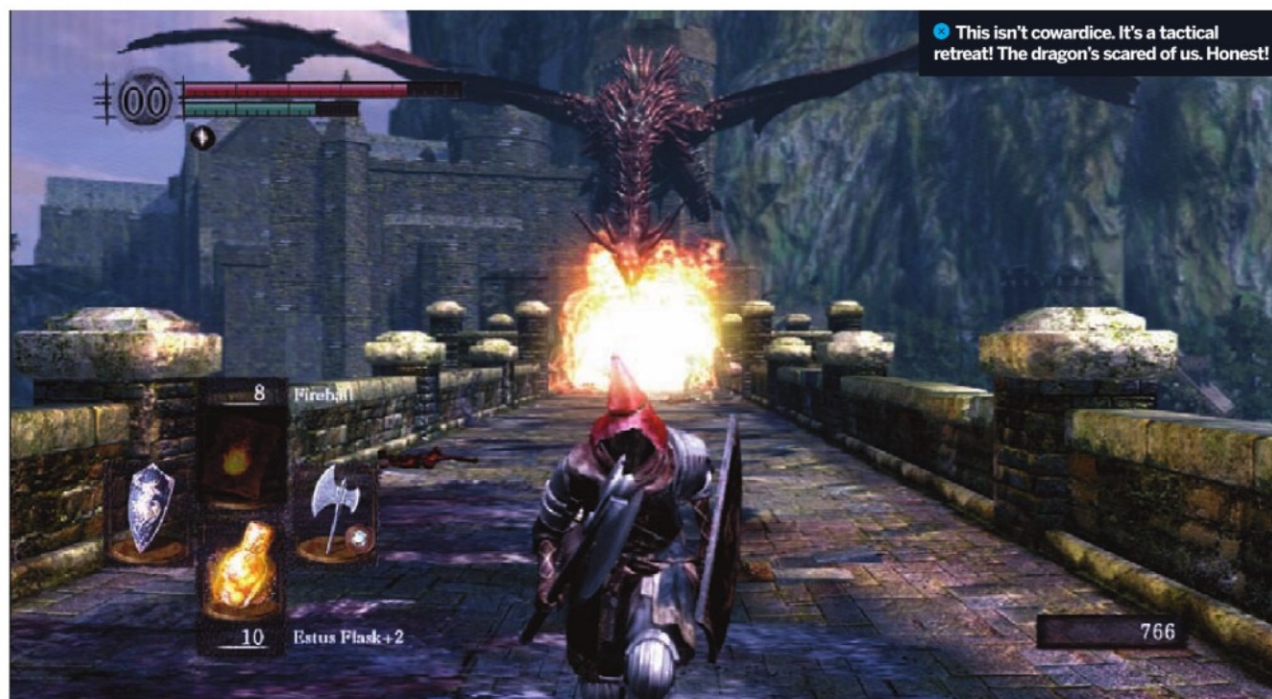
the host. Knowing this can happen at almost any time is utterly terrifying, especially when making your way back to a huge pile of souls you just lost – there are few quicker ways to meet your maker in *Dark Souls* than to rush things, but with the ever-present threat of invasion, taking your time isn't exactly an option either. Cowards can always opt to play the game in Offline mode, though to do so is to miss out on one of the most original aspects of the game... plus invasions can

still occur offline, albeit seemingly far more rarely.

But if so much of *Dark Souls* is an intimidating, imposing tour of obscene difficulty and abject horror, when exactly

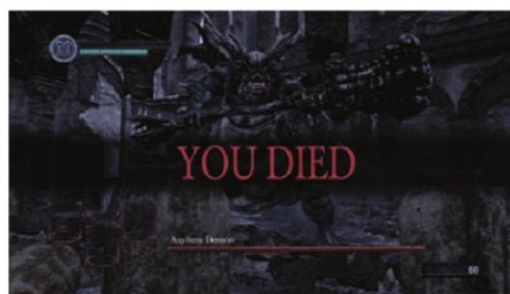
does the fun start? Fun might not even be the right word at all. Far better would be 'satisfaction' and that, you'll be glad to hear, is rife in this hellish world. Every perfectly timed roll, every expertly executed parry and bone-crunching riposte, every discovery... everything from finally working out a basic gameplay mechanic to felling a massive boss by the skin of your teeth just feels so rewarding that it's almost impossible to name a game that even comes close to offering such an immense sense of achievement and success in even its most trivial moments. It's dangerously moreish, too, the total freedom making it easy to burn hours just grinding souls, farming rare drops or doing whatever you like – even when you feel like you've hit a wall, all it takes is to find one new tunnel and you'll be hooked anew, desperate to see what evil lurks around each corner and how you'll possibly overcome it.

From Software has, once again, stumbled upon some secret formula that lets it make a game simultaneously soul-crushingly tough but also almost impossible to put down. Every failed run at a new boss spurs you on to try harder (as do the frequent ghostly visions of other players struggling and the sound of bells that peel in celebration of another's success), every soul drop piles on the pressure to make it back to your corpse in one piece... it gets to the point where there's even a masochistic thrill in seeing what horrible way you'll get killed to bits next.

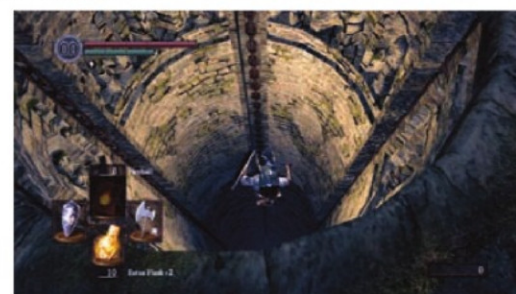


WELCOME TO DIE

Here are just a few of the top causes of death in Dark Souls...



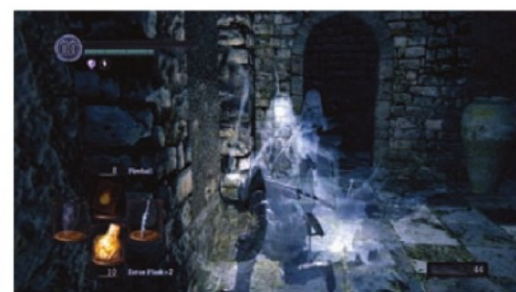
Yes, beating certain bosses under strict conditions can yield rare loot. But that doesn't mean you're anywhere near good enough at the game to actually get it.



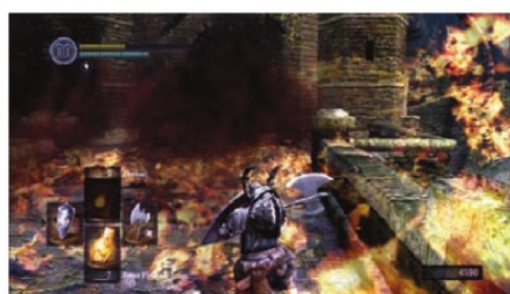
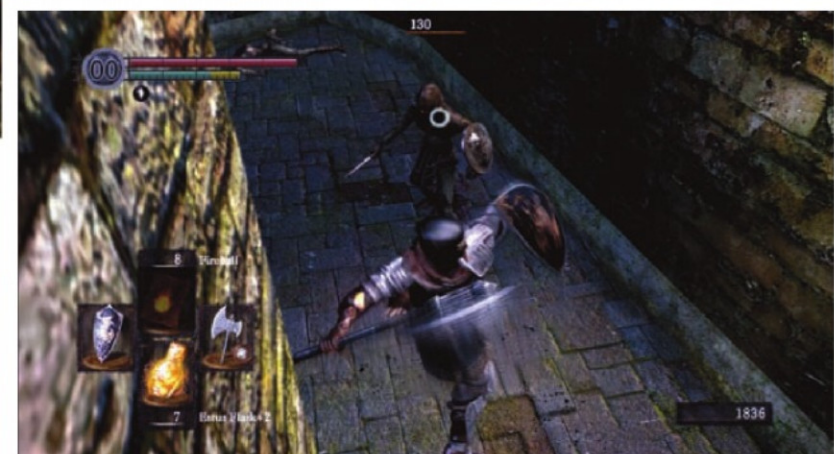
Less haste, more speed? No, less of both is what's required if you don't want to keep tumbling off cliffs and losing everything.



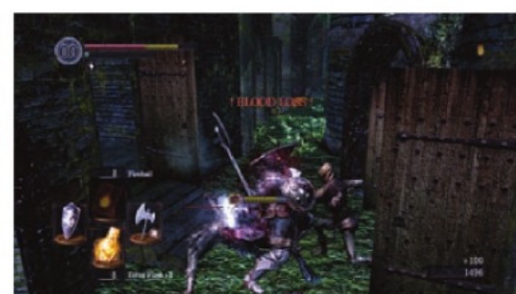
Something shiny and just out of your reach? Considering making a leap of faith to try and get your hands on it? Yeah, that'll end well...



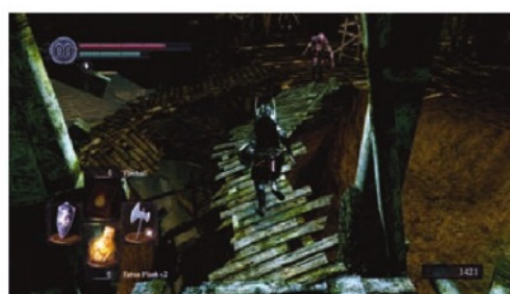
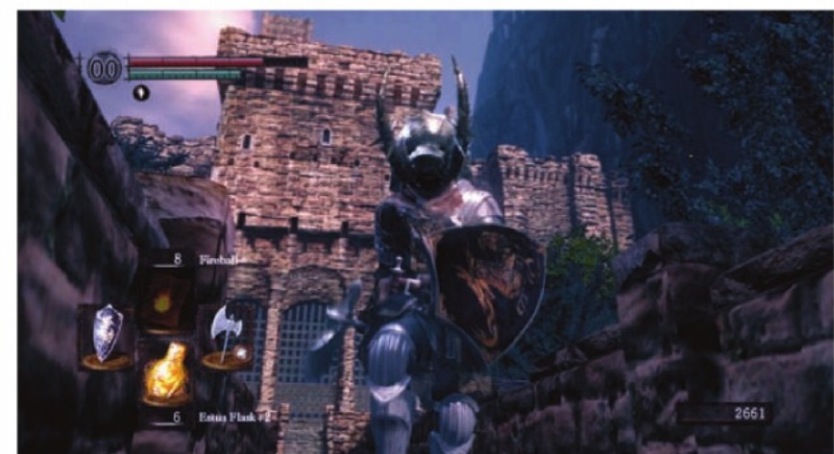
Some enemies have very specific weaknesses, others seemingly none at all. *Dark Souls* is all about knowing when to admit defeat and run away.



Many people don't even realise that they're allergic to fire until they get scorched to a crisp by a dragon. Be sure to check before you venture out.



Most RPGs portray status effects as mild annoyances. *Dark Souls* has several that can kick all of your ass in seconds. Be careful out there.



Weapon attacks often move your character around a little more than you'd like – learning this is crucial, otherwise fights on tight ledges will often end in a long fall.



Oh yeah, those guys. Just as well there aren't loads and loads of insanely tough monsters out there to get in your way. Oh. Hi, guys.

It's stressful, sure, but if it sinks its grotty, diseased teeth into you, you can pretty much forget sleep, clear your social calendar and wave goodbye to free time of all descriptions.

Make no mistake, though – this is far from a universal recommendation. Successful applicants to From's School Of Ridiculously Hard Knocks will be able to demonstrate patience and restraint, be able to cope with the idea of spending several hours at a time for potentially no real progress and be equipped to make on-the-spot, game-changing decisions without fear of the repercussions. Think you tick all those boxes? Enroll today and prepare to die. And even if you don't normally go for RPGs or like difficult games,

we'd still recommend you take a look at *Dark Souls*, if only to see what you're missing. This is brutal. This is terrifying. This is oppressive. This is punishing. This is one of the best games of the year. Grow a pair and get involved.

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

It certainly isn't for everyone but to those that buy into the master and slave gaming mentality (and you shouldn't have to ask which role the game will be playing), *Dark Souls* is a sprawling and beautifully built role-player from which there is no escape.

90%





RELEASE DATE: 14 OCTOBER

Dead Rising 2: Off The Record

If you tolerate this...



DETAILS

Publisher
Capcom
Developer
Blue Castle
Price
£29.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Action adventure
Age Rating
18
Website
www.capcom-europe.com/games/Dead-Rising-2-Off-The-Record/
Twitter
@Capcom_UK
Facebook
www.facebook.com/capcommunity



Oh dear. We're well aware of Capcom's chequered past when it comes to DLC – whether it's through *Resident Evil 5*'s tacked-on multiplayer mode or *Street Fighter IV*'s plethora of overpriced character costumes. Not to forget the developer's penchant for adding 'Super Ultimate' to its games and re-releasing them for the baying beat-'em-up fans. Here's Capcom's latest travesty, then, 'Dead Rising 2: Super Ultimate Special Fantastic Edition'.

First off, if you've played and completed *Dead Rising 2*, then don't bother with *Off The Record*: it's the same game. Sure, you'll fill the overweight shoes of Frank West instead of Chuck Greene. Sure, you can take photos now. And sure, there's a new area added to Fortune City, but when almost every cut-scene is the same as the original *Dead Rising 2* just with a few dialogue alterations here and there (sometimes amounting to little more than changing 'Chuck' with 'Frank') then it quickly becomes an insult.

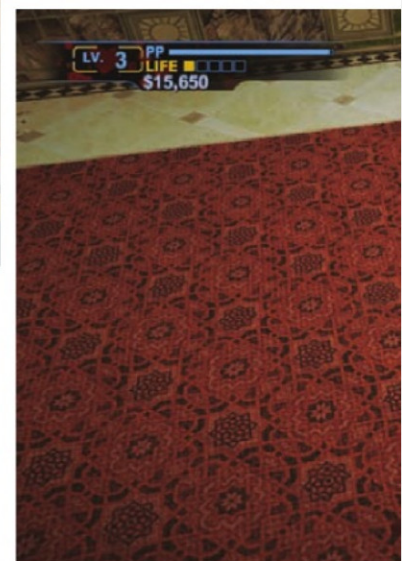
Frank West replaces Chuck Greene wholesale, with minimal differences in mission structure or objectives. Every so often there will be a section that requires taking photographic evidence, but for the most part the result is the same. Similarly, while there

are new survivors and psychopaths to contend with, they're so limited you'd be hard-pressed to spot them. It still suffers from that endlessly ticking clock, too, meaning most of the gameplay will be wasted evading crowds of the shuffling undead to quickly reach any of your ongoing missions.

The perfect antidote to this, then, is the new Sandbox mode. Here you're free to explore every nook and cranny and slaughter as many of the zombies as you like. It's the ideal companion to the time-restricted campaign mode, enabling a little free-roam action when you're not up for managing the time-based mission structure that *Dead Rising* is becoming known for. Challenges are added here, too; bite-sized tasks that reward with cash and

As a reinterpretation of the existing *Dead Rising 2* story, *Off The Record* fails on every level

Prestige Points (PP) for levelling that can be carried over to the main campaign. These vary between killing as many zombies in the allotted time, herding undead into a single area or even collecting more dildos than any one man should own. Even psychopaths and survivors return without ceremony and are aggressive



and looking for Frank's blood – cementing the fact that Sandbox mode is all about the simple enjoyment of gratuitous violence.

Additionally, there's a new checkpointing system, which initiates throughout missions, after each loading screen and at the start of a psychopath battle. While this can often leave you unprepared for a tough fight, it's considerably less bitter than having to tromp across Fortune City each time you die. Though, of course, if you've already played *Dead Rising 2* then you'll know how to defeat most of these crazies anyway.

Photography returns from the (filthy) Xbox 360 original, a feature those (filthy) Xbotts whined about when Chuck was first revealed for *Dead Rising 2*. For what it's worth, Frank's returning skill highlights just how unnecessary the feature really was. Aside from the novelty of capturing a high-scoring image by chance the feature has been tempered, making it much less necessary throughout the game. Still,

In this series



Dead Rising 2 Issue 197
Almost identical in every way, except for a handful of improvements and dialogue changes. **78%**



Note: plates aren't very useful when fending off a wave of zombies.

BEEN DEALING WITH NUTBARS?

The trials and tribulations of coping with mentalists

FOR A GAME about surviving a zombie outbreak, you don't half spend your time killing people. In-between all the looters and the mercenaries, you'll find yourself adding to the undead horde more than taking away. Of course the popular psychopaths return but much like the rest of *Off The Record*, many of these have been seen before. Chuck Greene, however, is a special case. Meeting him offers a ton of fan service, even if his mental wellbeing seems a little... off. Still, nice to have a new – if recognisable – nutbar, as Chuck so eloquently puts it.



Hey, sorry buddy, I thought you were one of those crazies.



ZOMBREX 0
CASE 1-2: Alive on Location
Welcome to the Family

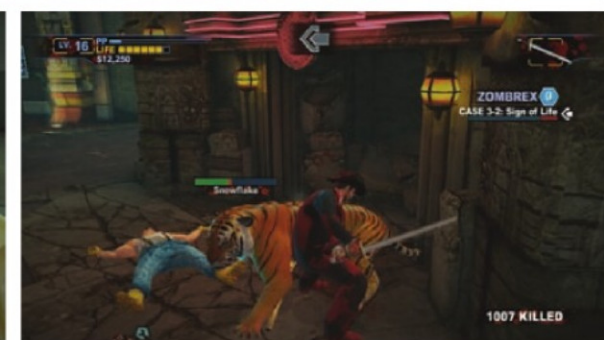
Dildo vs crowbar: it's the fight of the century.



Chuck isn't the only one who can tear up a mall of zombies on a motorbike...

CASE 3-2: SI

931



1007 KILLED

special circumstances might pop up from time to time – not unlike the (filthy) original's Photo Ops – rewarding quick reactions with a healthy dose of PP to help level up.

Then there's Uranus Zone: and no, this time we're not making a crude innuendo. This new section of map is a spacious sci-fi-themed amusement park and is where the majority of the new combo weapons can be found. While Uranus Zone certainly looks appealing (HAR!), it doesn't have much in the way of interaction. Some of the existing missions and survivors copied over from *Dead Rising 2* have been relocated to the area, but there's nothing here worth exploring Uranus Zone for (HAR HAR!).

All these new additions – except for the appreciated Sandbox mode – are largely peripheral, however; subtle tweaks to improve on *Dead Rising 2* that could – no, *should* – have been resolved in a patch. As a reinterpretation of the existing *Dead Rising 2* story, *Off The Record* fails on every level. We'd have cherished

the chance to revisit Fortune City through a new pair of eyes, but with so little changed it's hard to recommend – least of all to those who have already completed *Dead Rising 2*... you know, the fans.

If you're new to *Dead Rising* then this is by far the best one yet, but for Capcom to charge its loyal fans even more money for what amounts to little more than a costume pack and a couple of new features is offensive to those that helped make the series such a huge success in the first place.

Adam Barnes

VERDICT

If you've never played *Dead Rising 2* then add an extra 20% to the score, *Off The Record* is an improved version of that. Everyone else, don't bother. As cheap DLC it'd be acceptable, but even with the 'budget price' it's very hard to recommend.

61%



How To Remain Inconspicuous
101: Dress like a Texan millionaire.

this stuff over here, 'cause we're leaving in a few.



870 KILLED



• The first level is a clear homage to *Rez* – pumping music that was socially acceptable about ten years ago.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Child Of Eden

Like no child we know



DETAILS

Publisher

Ubisoft

Developer

Q Games

Price

£19.99

Players

1

Genre

Rhythm action/

Shooter

Age Rating

7

Website

<http://child-of-eden.uk.ubi.com>

Twitter

@Ubisoft

Facebook

<facebook.com/ubisoft>

ubisoft

PS3

If nightclub culture was better than the sticky and debauched nightmare that it actually is (not to get too fifties dad about it), we imagine this Oakenfold-free paradise would be a lavish audiovisual extravaganza like *Child Of Eden*, the delayed-on-PS3 curio that has thus far been ignored by Captain Public. A spiritual successor to *Rez*, of sorts, it's an exceptionally replayable, gorgeously presented on-rails shooter that realises life beyond dusty plastic instruments for the rhythm-action genre. Packaged here for a mere £20, there's little reason to skip such a uniquely crafted work.

The goal in the story is to save Project Lumi, best described as an intergalactic super baby that resembles an attractive woman, surrounded by weird flashing things. Story is kind of superfluous in *Child Of Eden* – actually, pretty much everything is, outside of absorbing the elaborate composition of the game's five beautiful 'Archives' (read: levels).

A spiritual successor to *Rez*, of sorts, it's an exceptionally replayable, gorgeously presented on-rails shooter

Each one has a distinctive flavour: whales transforming into birds, big gears shifting around or purple and red men running down a space corridor, that sort of normal stuff. It's those random attacks on the senses, mixed with catchy J-pop music, that means you'll want to revisit each of these relatively brief levels. The actual combat is limited but challenging. You have two types of laser: a main gun, that can charge up and pull off combo attacks, plus another quickfire one that is less powerful, but mainly used to disable certain types of shields and shoot down enemy fire (the latter task becomes a bit of a ball ache later on).

You're probably wondering how the Move controller plays into this, it being a means of becoming more 'immersed' in the game

(but not really, because calibrating it still reminds us of playing *Time Crisis* at home circa 1998). Ah yes... it's worthless. The

Move controller, much as it has elsewhere with other compatible titles, will turn a really good *Child Of Eden* player into a very sweaty and tired one. The motion control made sense with Kinect, it being a hands-free waste of time rather than one that requires three faintly ridiculous peripherals; here, we're hitting the trigger to perform the secondary laser, as well as shaking the controller to unleash combo moves, throwing your aim out of the window. It's just an eyebrow-raising distraction from everything else the game does right.

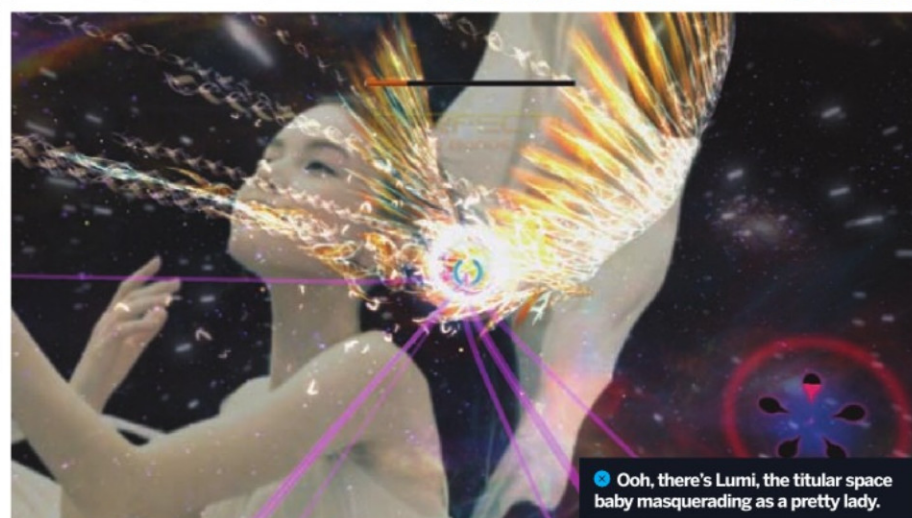
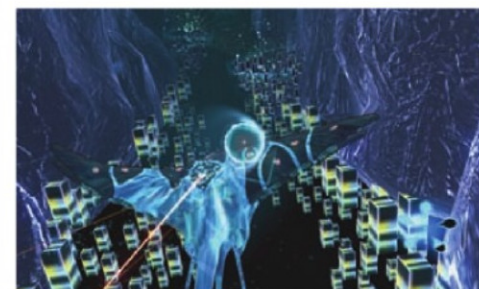
Ignoring the Move implementation, though, the art and sound direction are *Child Of Eden*'s real triumphs, and both will keep your eyes glued open regardless of which controller you're dancing in front of the telly with.

Samuel Roberts

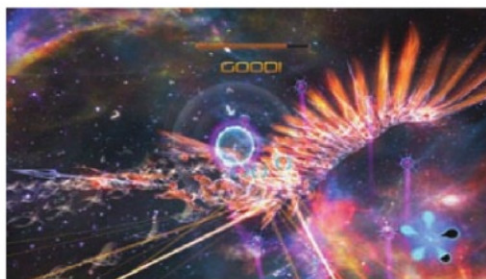
VERDICT

Child Of Eden is this year's only artistically unique rhythm-action experience, despite a relatively short length. The presentation is so rich and imaginative that it flies in the face of every possible trend the industry has right now, and for £20 you should be part of that.

80%



• Ooh, there's Lumi, the titular space baby masquerading as a pretty lady.



Or you
could try

Riff: Everyday Shooter Issue 162
We could've said *Rez*, but this is a more fascinating experiment with music/gameplay interactive fluff. **86%**

Supremacy MMA certainly isn't for the faint of heart. Fights get gory and fighters get bloody fast.

Supremacy MMA



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Supremacy MMA

As real as it doesn't get...



DETAILS

Publisher
505 Games
Developer
Kung Fu Factory
Price
£49.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Sports
Age Rating
18
Website
supremacymma.com
Twitter
@SupremacyMMA
Facebook
facebook.com/SupremacyMMAUK

PS3 Man, the 505 Games team are a brave bunch. Despite seeing the juggernaut that is EA release a critically well-received mixed martial arts title that failed to find any real success with gamers and the planned series itself being given the boot, the developer has gone ahead and unleashed *Supremacy MMA* on the world anyway. Following a similar approach, Kung Fu Factory's aim seems to be making this as accessible as possible, largely by throwing most of the rules out the window. While in theory this is a good idea – not everyone wants to get bogged down with the ins and outs of a clinch – in practice it doesn't work. At all.

Supremacy MMA's biggest problem is how rushed every fight feels. Rather than getting a chance to feel out your opponent, most clashes descend into a brawl almost instantly, often resulting in you mashing away as you try to keep up. If you think that's the pinnacle of entertainment, feel free to stop reading now. It's also near impossible to play. For reasons only the developer itself can explain, locking in a submission doesn't mean you'll actually get an opponent to surrender. Instead, the first few will just

Fighters don't turn into wooden beams halfway through fights. This is just a poor image.



Features a story mode that couldn't be more clichéd if it tried and a host of styles that don't stand out from each other

cause them 'damage', presumably loosening them up for when you reapply the hold. The question is, then, why the hell you ever decided to let them free in the first place, but we assume they're questions for another time. Worse than this is trying to defend against any potential manoeuvre. Given the task of wiggling the right stick faster than your rival (it works the same when instigating the move) we're 99 per cent certain it's impossible to react fast enough unless you purposefully allow yourself to be put in a hold. Only then do you have enough time to readjust and give yourself somewhat of a chance. It's ludicrous beyond belief.

Throw in a story mode that couldn't be more clichéd if it tried, a host of styles that

never really stand out from each other and a fighting model which breaks down into a skirmish on almost

every occasion and 505's attempts to create a welcoming MMA game fall flat. If we're honest, EA has already done it far better. So, with all things considered, it's hard to say who exactly this has been made for. Your dad, maybe, who's desperate to get into this whole UFC craze. Yeah... buy it for your dad.

Simon Miller

VERDICT

For an hour or so *Supremacy MMA* is mildly entertaining, but its lack of depth, strange submission systems and attempts to move away from many of the sport's fundamentals makes it a difficult sell.

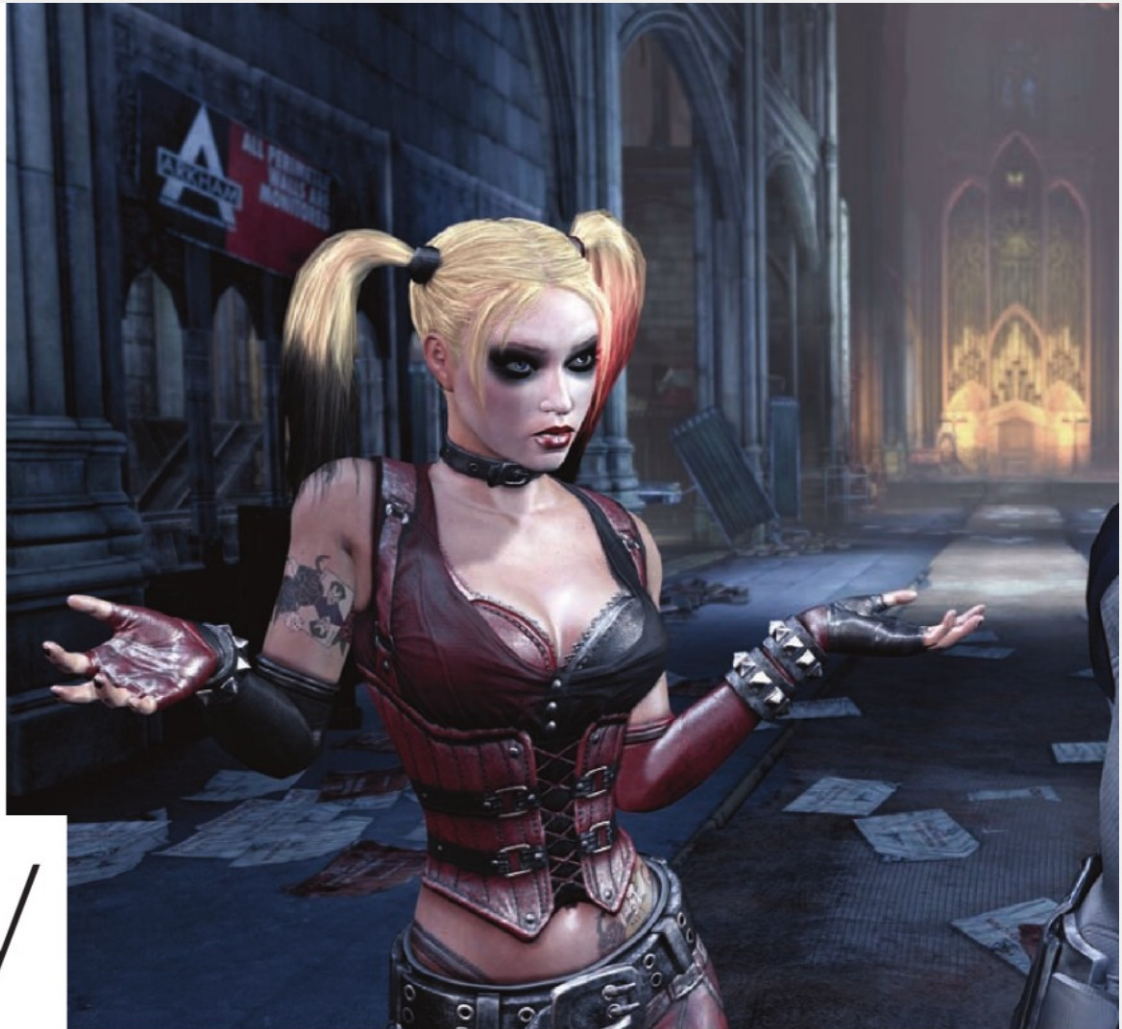
40%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Batman: Arkham City

It's what you do that defines you...



DETAILS

Publisher
Warner Bros.
Developer
Rocksteady
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Action Adventure
Age Rating
15
Website
batmanarkhamcity.org
Twitter
@arkhamcitynews
Facebook
facebook.com/batmanarkhamcity



Bizarrely, we feel a little sorry for Rocksteady. Thrown into the limelight thanks to 2009's *Batman: Arkham Asylum*, its ability to do what nobody thought was possible – make a good superhero game – meant it had to deal with newfound pressure, with everyone from angry keyboard warriors on internet forums to die-hard comic book fans watching its next move. And its next move? This. *Batman: Arkham City*. If those same keyboard-clattering die-hards are to be believed, it's ready to lynch the studio should it dare even think about messing this all up. Not the fairest way to treat any developer, but alas, this is the price of success.

Thankfully, the Dark Knight's second entry under the Rocksteady banner is an utter triumph. Moving events away from the slightly claustrophobic prison designed for the insane into the much larger metropolis that still caters for those who are nuts, *Arkham City*'s main goal from the off is to make you feel like Batman – there's a reason why one of the game's earliest moments is our favourite superhero perched on the edge of a building, cape flapping in the wind as the music becomes suitably more epic. It's how this has all been approached that makes it so damn enjoyable to play, though.

Aside from the overarching story, which works in a barrage of famous villains, the numerous side-quests in *Arkham City*'s monstrous open-world territory is where a strong role-playing element truly comes into effect. Gliding around the environment uncovers so many crimes in progress and random encounters, it's hard not to suspend your disbelief and start thinking you're actually Batman. Well, a Batman sitting on the couch

Batman: Arkham City is probably one of the best games this year, if not the entire generation

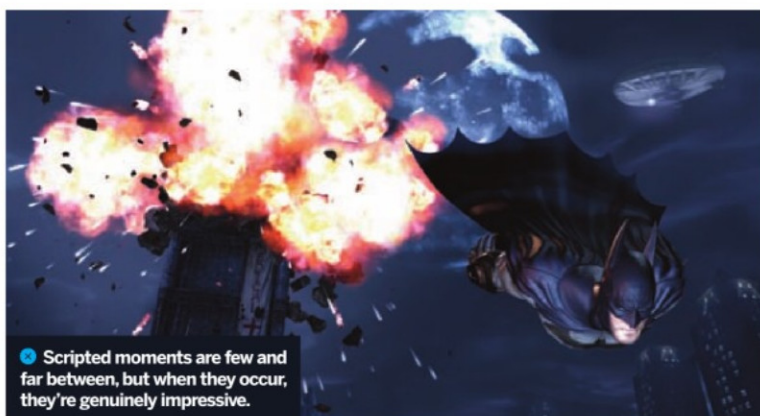
playing PlayStation 3, bottle of Frijj by his side and checking Facebook during the loading screens, perhaps. But still! You're Batman!

As well as the attention to detail and the clear understanding that Rocksteady has for the dense lore (it's easily better than some comic book writers who have breached the subject), the developer has gone to town on everything that made the first entry so appealing. Combat has been tweaked and polished no end, becoming far more satisfying than it was before and adding in a host of new

tricks that push it into contention of being the most satisfying fighting mechanic to ever come out of a videogame. Riddler Trophies have also taken on a life of their own (and they were no slouch previously), with the whole idea of the master criminal now taking a significant step forward. You'll still have to attempt to solve his puzzles, but the level they eventually reach, and the participation of the man himself, is much greater, and better thought out, than they ever were in the past. Be it becoming more comfortable and confident with the franchise or just a host of ideas that came out of making the first, the sequel improves in nearly every area that was deemed such a

feat a few years ago.

It's achingly close to perfect and only falters in one area. When entering many of the buildings dotted around the city, *Arkham Asylum*'s slightly formulaic gargoyle swinging attack pattern returns. It's still very reminiscent of how you'd imagine Batman going about his business of kicking arse and taking names, with the addition of new gadgetry such as the Bat Claw and Remote Electrical Charge Gun adding a sense of diversity into how you do away with armed



Scripted moments are few and far between, but when they occur, they're genuinely impressive.



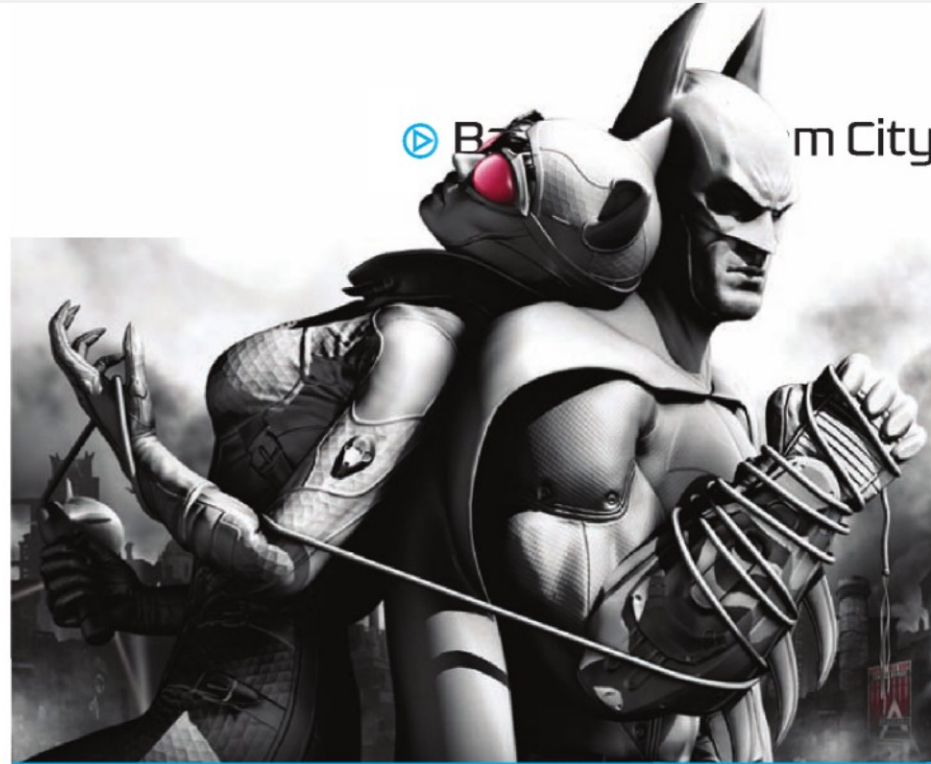
In this series



Batman: Arkham Asylum Issue 183
Rocksteady really should be praised for nailing the essence of the character as well as it has. **85%**



Many old faces return as well as a few new ones that will genuinely surprise.



HERE KITTY, KITTY

The cat joins the bat

DESPITE SOME FRACAS when announced, there really is no need to worry about Catwoman now being a playable character. Aside from not featuring a great amount, her segments prove as a pleasing way to both change up the pacing and add a very interesting twist to the story. Even if you choose to ignore them (by not downloading the DLC) you still won't miss out on too much as Rocksteady has ensured that no one feels short-changed. It's a smart way that ensures everyone leaves feeling happy, even though we know some of you will find a problem anyway...



Certain individuals will have to be interrogated to uncover all of Arkham City's secrets.



Batman can now take on far more enemies at one time.

foes – we just feel it's one of the few areas where Rocksteady could improve in the future.

With all that said, however, the good here raises the bar so high such minor quibbles never overly grate or even last long in the memory and, amazingly, it's easy to forget that there's even more content outside of the gigantic universe already created. The popular challenge maps return, revealing a whole new level of depth to each of the characters who can participate in them and even the addition of 3D, for those lucky enough to have a compatible TV, is genuinely remarkable.

We're sure you've already seen plenty of quotes and sound bites that announce *Arkham City* as the best superhero game ever made but such statements sell the game short: Batman's latest digital outing is

probably one of the best games this year, if not the entire generation. People who dislike the DC creation may not understand the hype, but those who do will struggle to even be the least bit disappointed. New ground has been reached once more, and Rocksteady has easily cemented itself as one of the most important and untouchable developers currently around.

Simon Miller

VERDICT

Essentially a Batman simulator, *Arkham City* is an absolute beast of a game that lives up to the promise Rocksteady instilled when it created *Arkham*

Asylum. Easily one of the best games you'll play in 2011 and beyond.

94%



We're seriously attracted to Harley Quinn. And what?



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

X-Men Destiny

Almost as bad as
X-Men: The Last Stand. Almost



DETAILS

Publisher
Activision
Developer
Silicon Knights
Price
£39.99
Players
1
Genre
Beat-'em-up
Age Rating
16
Website
www.heroHQ.com/
xmendestiny
Twitter
@heroHQ
Facebook
facebook.com/
heroHQ

PS3

Well this is a letdown. When *Destiny* was announced, we were intrigued: who wouldn't like the thought of an X-Men-focused RPG-lite experience, one where you could mould a blank-slate X-dude into your own image, using both your fists and your brains to decide the upcoming war between the warring human and mutant factions? *Mass Effect* meets *X-Men: Children Of The Atom*? Yes please.

Sadly this hasn't happened. Instead, *X-Men Destiny* is simply terrible in every conceivable way. Which, as you can probably imagine, is The Last Thing We Wanted To Happen.

Let's start with the graphics, which a staffer in the office mistook for the game

Looks like an interactive
instruction manual on
programming your first PS2 game

Fighting Force. Which came out in 1997. On PlayStation. Okay, so it doesn't look quite *that* bad, but there's no getting away from the fact that *Destiny* looks like an interactive instruction manual on programming your first

The secret power of farting?



PS2 game. Low polygon characters, terrible textures, horrendous collision problems and a frame rate so choppy you'll need Popeye-level sea legs to get out with your lunch intact.

But hey: who cares about graphics, right? Plenty of good games have bad graphics. Unfortunately, *X-Men* plays as bad as it looks. The combat is atrocious, consisting of little more than tapping the same boring combo until all of your stupid identical foes fall over. Sometimes you'll fight a boss, who if you're lucky might not run into a wall. He might even attack you. Crazy, eh?

The 'RPG' elements are just as bad. Instead of creating your own character from scratch, you choose from set archetypes (the massively powerful slugger, the athletic



female and so on) and then give them the moves of other X-Men. Which seems like a good way to create an Uber X-Man, but you never feel like it's your own creation.

Add boring quests, terrible dialogue and dialogue choices and you've got a game that even the staunchest X-Men fan would struggle to like, including those deluded fools who think that *X-Men 3* is anywhere near acceptable entertainment. Another dud from developer Silicon Knights then, to go along with *Too Human*. We dread to think what's coming next.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

There's nothing wrong with the idea, but the execution is unforgivable. A buggy, boring mess of a game that's a total waste of the licence, this is the sort of effort that makes you question what the developer was thinking at any given phase of the project.

35%



Imagine if the films looked like this too. Or the comics. Sigh.



Or you
could try



Mass Effect 2 Issue 201
What are you doing reading this when you could be playing this instead? 97%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

NBA 2K12

No need to Air on the side of caution



DETAILS

Publisher
2K
Developer
Visual Concepts
Price
£49.99
Players
1-7
Genre
Sports
Age Rating
3
Website
2ksports.com/
games/nba2k12
Twitter
@2KSports
Facebook
facebook.
com/2KSports



PS3 NBA 2K12 is a bloody good game, there's no denying that. If you're a basketball fan it's going to make your mind break into a thousand pieces as you struggle to keep up with the staggering amount of authenticity on display. From the way the players move to the excellent commentary and overall presentation, NBA 2K12 just *is* basketball.

Another fine entry into the series, which will delight fans and slowly draw in those with an aversion to the sport

It's also unrelentingly hard, and if you don't know your personal fouls from your reach-in fouls you can expect to get stomped by the CPU for the first couple of hours. It's frustrating – as is the nagging feeling that the CPU is indulging in some PES-style scripting shenanigans – but as those minutes tick by you can feel your appreciation for both the sport and the game's systems deepening, which is surely the sign of an excellent sports title.

So the on-court action is still spectacular, much as it was last year. Off the paint,

however, there's a wealth of new features that will no doubt appeal to basketball fanatics. The main new feature is NBA's Greatest, and enables players to duke it out as classic teams (and the players that made them so great) from down the years in a bid to see whether Jordan was actually the greatest, if 'Magic' Johnson lived up to his nickname and if Wilt Chamberlain did change the game forever (unsurprisingly, the answers are yes).

A fair amount of effort has gone into these classic games, with the older periods in particular

depicted in old-school fuzzy TV style, replete with basic broadcast fonts and changed rules – no dunking in the Sixties, and no three-point line until after 1984, for example. It's an interesting diversion, and sure to be the source of quite a few arguments between diehard fans of the game.

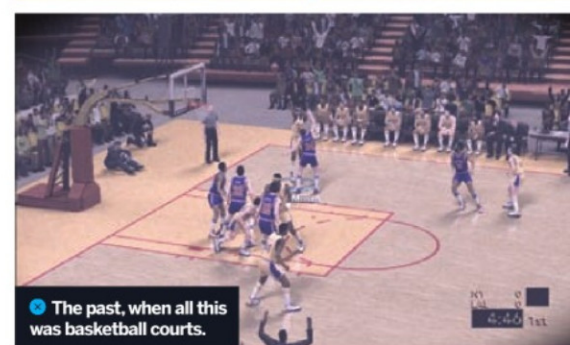
NBA 2K12 is another fine entry into Visual Concepts' long-running series, one which will delight b-ball fans while also slowly drawing in those with an aversion to the sport. Apart from the punishing difficulty the only other issue is that the rosters aren't completely up to date thanks to the NBA lockout and the season being cancelled, but it's hard to blame the developers for that. Recommended.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

Frustrating at first, but given time NBA 2K12 reveals its class. New modes and updated favourites round out a package that is as good on the court as it is off of it, and overall it's one of the finest representations of a sport out there.

88%



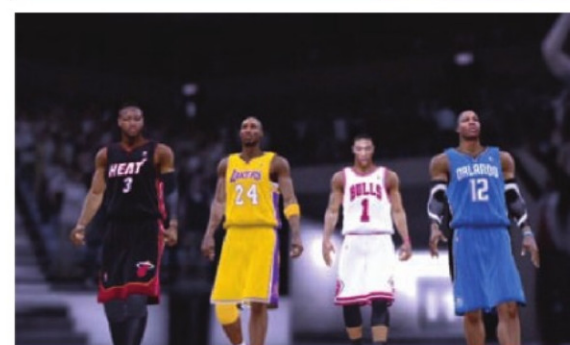
• The past, when all this was basketball courts.



• Rodman, his mind finally snapped from too much hair bleach, invents SwimBall™.



• Here's Jordan, being better at everything than you.





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Ace Combat: Assault Horizon

More Iron Eagle than Top Gun?



For about an hour *Ace Combat: Assault Horizon* will feel like the most exciting game you've ever played. Rightly wary that players were probably bored by finding specks in the sky and shooting at them from eight miles away, developer Project Aces has attempted to jazz up the series, and by jazz up the series, we mean make it more like *Call Of Duty*. Not that the dev team is ashamed of this fact, publicly promoting the game on the back of such comparisons. By and large it has succeeded admirably.

Besides new storytelling tweaks and the fact you can pilot vehicles and weapons systems other than planes (which we'll get to in a minute), the most drastic change has been made to the core of the game: dogfighting. Long has it been that you'd buy an arcade flight game, dreaming of being Maverick only to have the game make you play like Goose. Here, however, dogfighting has been overhauled via what we at **Play** like to call the Michael Bay-o-tron: in-your-face explosions, close-call flybys and near-misses, and explosions so detailed you can see rival pilots being blasted out of their cockpits when you shoot them down.

Dogfight mode (or DFM) is initiated by getting close to your foe and locking on with **L2** and **R2**. Contrary to the system found in Ubisoft's *H.A.W.X.*, where the camera zooms out, here it gets in tight to the plane, changing and swooping around as you use various weapons and generally making you feel as if you're right there in the cockpit. It's a superior system.

While in DFM you've got to tactically use acceleration and deceleration: too fast and you'll be outmanoeuvred when the bogey turns, too slow and they could power away. Your objective is to find the sweet spot between speed and accuracy to hold the enemy plane in your sights until you get the

For about an hour *Ace Combat: Assault Horizon* will feel like the most exciting game you've ever played

firing tone, and then it's adios to the flyboy in front of you.

It's amazing what a difference this makes to the series. Now, engagements (at least to begin with) are edge-of-your-seat thrill rides, especially against the smarter foes who will lead you on a dazzling chase of missed shots, raking machine gun fire, impossible G turns



DETAILS

Publisher
Namco Bandai
Developer
Project Aces
Price
£39.99
Players
1-16
Genre
Flight sim
Age Rating
16
Website
acecombatassault
horizon.namco
bandaigames.eu/
Twitter
@hawkgunner
Facebook
http://on.fb.me/
qEeFwm

We hope he's insured.



and the sight of paint and oil scraping the windshield as you clip the plane.

It's this mechanic, combined with some inspired locations (fighting over Dubai is an awesome sight) that makes *Ace Combat*, initially at least, so thrilling. Give it an hour or so, however, and that joy fades into slight repetition: you're still enjoying yourself, no question. It's just that there's not much you can really do to differentiate one dogfight from another at the end of the day.

Project Aces knows this, of course, and has decided to change the gameplay up intermittently. It's here where the developer has taken a big chunk out of the *Call Of Duty* playbook, with mixed results.

You'll find yourself playing as a door gunner, covering the advance of ground forces and helicopter squadrons in missions that are almost exactly the same in both content and setting as *Call Of Duty 4*'s 'Charlie Don't Surf'.

Or you could try



Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2 Issue 196
A good alternative, but nowhere near as accomplished. **69%**



DO A BARREL ROLL!

Ace Combat has the defensive skills to pay the bills

AS WELL AS boasting the best offensive dogfighting in an arcade flight sim, there's also some inspired evasive manoeuvres on offer in *Ace Combat* if you're the one being chased. Namco has implemented a tense risk reward system where you have to slow down (and make yourself more susceptible to machine gun and missile fire) until two markers overlap before flipping over behind your enemy, *Top Gun* style. Superbly satisfying (especially when pulled off while flying between two skyscrapers) it's one of those mechanics that's as much fun to watch as it is to pull off.



You'll play as the rear gunner in an AC-130U, bombing enemies and providing cover for ground troops in exactly the same way as *Call Of Duty 4*'s 'Death From Above'.

It's not a bad place to take inspiration from, it's just that you can't shake the feeling that you've done it all before, and more stylishly with higher production values, in other games. Which, of course, you have.

There are the levels in which you actually pilot an Apache attack chopper, replete with some nifty (and ludicrous) evasive manoeuvres, such as barrel rolling.

Again you'll be covering ground troops and engaging in a bit of air-to-air fighting and again, it's a mixed bag. It's certainly a good idea on Project Aces' part to break up the dogfighting action, but these interludes generally go on for too long, leaving you desperate to get back to the planes which you were quite tiring of 20 minutes earlier. Not ideal.

That said *Ace Combat: Assault Horizon* is a triumph in the context of the series, and possibly a great start to a new direction for the established brand. It's not going to keep you entertained forever, but while it does there's nothing quite like it on PlayStation 3, and for that reason you should at least check out the demo on PSN. And if you do, you will probably think it's the most exciting game in the world. For a while.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

Initially thrilling, the buzz soon fades as repetition sets in. Nevertheless we've not played a more engaging or exciting arcade flight game on any console, and with a variety of aircraft to choose from this is perfect for armchair flyboys.

78%





DETAILS

Publisher
Milestone S.r.l
Developer
Black Bean Games
Price
£49.99
Players
1-16
Genre
Racing
Age Rating
3
Website
wrcthegame.com
Twitter
@WRCTheGame
Facebook
http://on.fb.me/rnjR1a

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

WRC 2: FIA World Rally Championship

The gaming event of the year: this isn't it

PS3 This sequel to last year's passable, if unspectacular rallying sim still exists squarely in the shadow of its brasher, showier contemporary, *DiRT 3*. It's good to get things like that out of the way early – though that's not to say it won't have appeal to anyone, as the usual grab-bag

Basic failings affect enjoyment, coupled with the fact it's just an entirely banal proposition

of rally enthusiasts will lap *WRC 2* up. Pun absolutely intended. Even if laps aren't a big part of rallying.

But we have to veer away from the realm of the fanboys, like a Subaru Impreza WRX

avoiding a track-encroaching moose, into the comforting arms of objectivity. *WRC 2* is a dull experience and it suffers from a few irritating, basic failings that affect enjoyment. It's unfair to compare a straightforward representation of the sport of rallying to something far showier like Codemasters'

effort, but it's pretty much all we have right now – and *WRC 2* doesn't have much to show, presentation-wise. Graphically it's a letdown, too, with bland, lifeless backgrounds flying past decently rendered cars.

As for those basic failings – well, the physics are what would conservatively be described as 'a bit off'. One minute you're bounding off a rock that should probably stop you, the next you're doing four barrel rolls after clipping a one-inch grass verge. There's also a strange occurrence we noticed more than a handful of times where your car sort of teleports an inch (on-screen) to the left or

right. It's hard to explain, but it was definitely there. There were also times when co-pilot instructions were mistimed or, at the very least, questionable. When you have to rely on something as much as you do directions in a game, they should be accurate all of the time, every time.

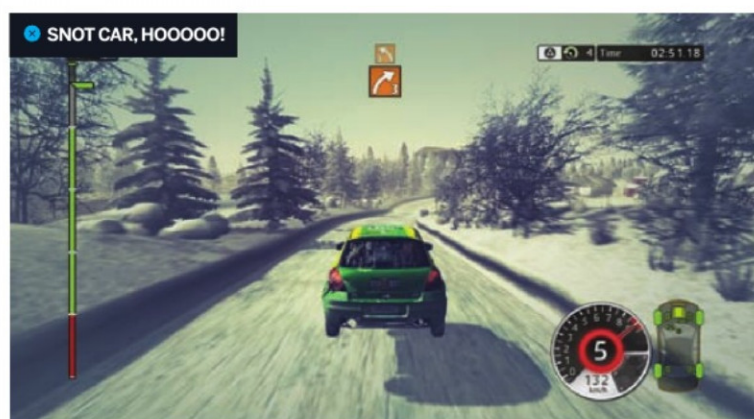
It's things like this that bring down what is an otherwise distracting and surprisingly addictive experience. You can level up, buy new cars, tinker with the vehicles you own, manage your staff (and hilariously rename them), rewind during races – even though that's just a Cheat Button – and generally achieve that sense of enjoyable partial-coma autopilot that comes with so many racing games. If you have the time and inclination, *WRC 2* wouldn't be a bad way to while away some hours. But it's a flawed experience, all in all, and rally fans that feel *DiRT 3* besmirches the sport will be happy enough with what's on offer.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Most of us will forget *WRC 2* even exists in about a week's time. We're not being mean, just realistic. It does nothing to really drag you in unless you're already obsessed with flinging bewheeled engines at wildlife in Scandinavia.

63%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



F1 2011

Do you like F1? That's the only question you need to answer

DETAILS

Publisher
Codemasters
Developer
In-house
Price
£39.99
Players
1-16
Genre
Racing
Age Rating
3
Website
www.formula1-game.com/uk/
Twitter
@formula1game
Facebook
facebook.com/formula1game



See that question up there? Answer it in your brain (you can say it out loud, but we won't be able to hear you, so that might be a waste of time) and that should be your guiding answer on whether or not to pick this up.

Still can't decide? Well, lucky we're here then isn't it? Anyway: if you're a fan, then you'll probably love the changes in *F1 2011*. The career mode is passable enough, if still a little lightweight. Although you can give interviews after you smash your 200mph death-rocket into a wall, so there's that. On the track, however, there's a load of new features to tinker with: KERS (where movement energy from the car is stored when braking to be used when accelerating) and DRS (which helps facilitate overtaking) are in, and new mechanics dictate the trade-offs you make between pace and precision, essentially making you ask the question 'if I keep driving into corners at 173mph, will my engine/face explode?'

Relentless Pursuit Of Accuracy Part 13: There's also a safety car now on the track following crashes and other incidents. Relentless Pursuit Of Accuracy Part 14: The two new tracks, India and Nürburgring, drive like their real-life counterparts (they haven't added alligator pits or anything) and are quite fun, the latter especially. Relentless Pursuit Of Accuracy Part 15: Time trials, online leaderboards and time attacks, which see you duking it out with a ghost car. Oh. Wait. Ghost cars aren't in real F1. Sigh.

So if you love F1, you'll probably get a kick out of this, especially with the amount of options available to tinker with your car. Casual or neutral fans, however, might find that while there is fun to be had here – it's still exhilarating to be part of a tight race or having to try to barge past competitors at corners – the game's dry, technical nature may easily turn off newcomers, and the fact that graphically it looks bum does it precisely no favours.

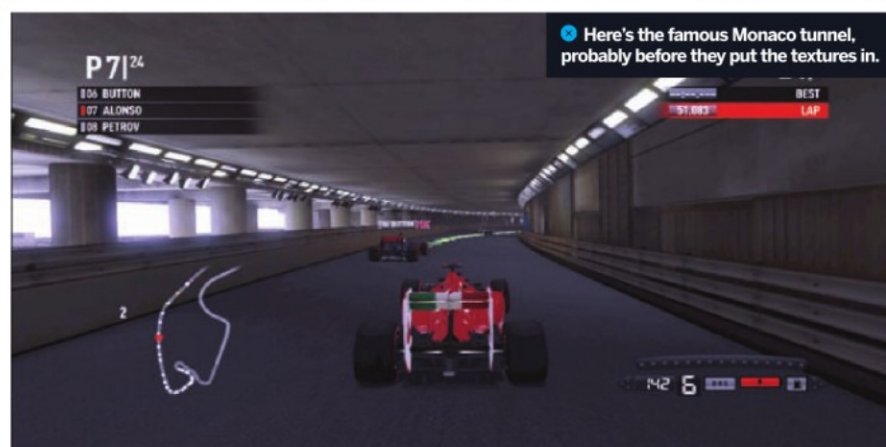
Still, there's fun to be had here, even if this is far from the definitive F1 experience.

Steve Burns

VERDICT

Good fun in places (even if you're not too fussed about the actual sport), *F1 2011* is a passable re-creation of the sport of watching millionaires try and kill themselves in tax-exempt countries. Sadly, a lack of sustained excitement and some truly horrendous graphics hold back all the good work.

71%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One

Not really one 4 all, though



It's actually quite surprising that *Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One* was developed by Insomniac Games. It just has that feel of a side project – the kind of thing you'd leave to other developers, like what happened with the PSP versions of *Ratchet*, for example. It *also* feels like there isn't quite as much imagination and care put into *All 4 One* as there has been in previous entries to the series, with a rather formulaic, bland feel to the majority of this game.

It's boring, but fun. It's simplistic, but satisfying. Alone it's shoddy, together it's half-decent

While taking place in the world of *Ratchet & Clank* and set after the events of *A Crack In Time*, *All 4 One* is not a part of the main series or the *Future* trilogy. As such, Insomniac has been freed up and allowed to tinker a little bit, which has led to, naturally, four-player co-

operative platforming. This isn't just a case of four of you playing at the same time and sometimes fighting together (though it is that most of the time), with the game throwing in a number of different elements that force you to actively work together.

Simple things like focusing your attacks on one enemy will yield bonus damage, for example. More complex elements, such as holding switches for an ally to retrieve a key item, which they then fire over to another member of the party who can unlock a door with it... well, they're interesting, but they sound more complex than they really are. It's well handled, but it never gets beyond a certain level of co-op and these mechanics are repeated over and over throughout the game. Having said that, the wheel-powered lift races are always fun.

This is how most of the troubles with *All 4 One* arise, though, with a repetitive nature masked over by some pretty visuals and



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony Computer Entertainment
Developer
Insomniac Games
Price
£51.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Platformer
Age Rating
7
Website
<http://bit.ly/q1vYRZ>
Twitter
@insomniacgames
Facebook
[facebook.com/insomniacgames](https://www.facebook.com/insomniacgames)

a story that raises *some* chuckles. While it could easily be put down to the review code we received, the game did crash or glitch out more times than we are comfortable enough to ignore, and the number of times the camera's swooping about caused us to simply 'lose' our characters off the side of the screen is certainly cause for concern. Though it does only require a quit out and reload to fix. Still, we hope this sort of thing is either less prevalent in the retail code or simply patched out.

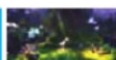
But a selection of irritations and technical failings do not make this an entirely bad game – they don't make *anything* entirely bad, if the skeleton of the whole thing is a solid, enjoyable experience. It's base, it's simple and it brings nothing of any real interest outside of the co-op mechanics – in fact, it's not even on a par with the standard *Ratchet & Clank* series when it comes to basic platforming. But it does it well enough to be inoffensive. 'Inoffensive' doesn't mean 'good', true, but it's not like we're on the verge of vomiting our lungs out through screaming bloody murder at how bad this is.

But just to add another 'but' to the But Pile, *Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One* isn't a game to be played alone. Single-player is available, pairing you up with a single, AI-controlled partner, and seemingly doing its best to highlight just how bland an experience this is without friends. It also has some questionable intelligence on the part of your compatriot, who we found would quite often just... not help. Not all the time, but enough for it to be noticeable and annoying: not attacking, running off too far ahead so stopping you from doubling back on yourself to collect pickups, being fired across chasms so you can tether onto them and drag yourself across only for them to immediately



● If you don't work together these enemies will cause problems.

Or you
could try

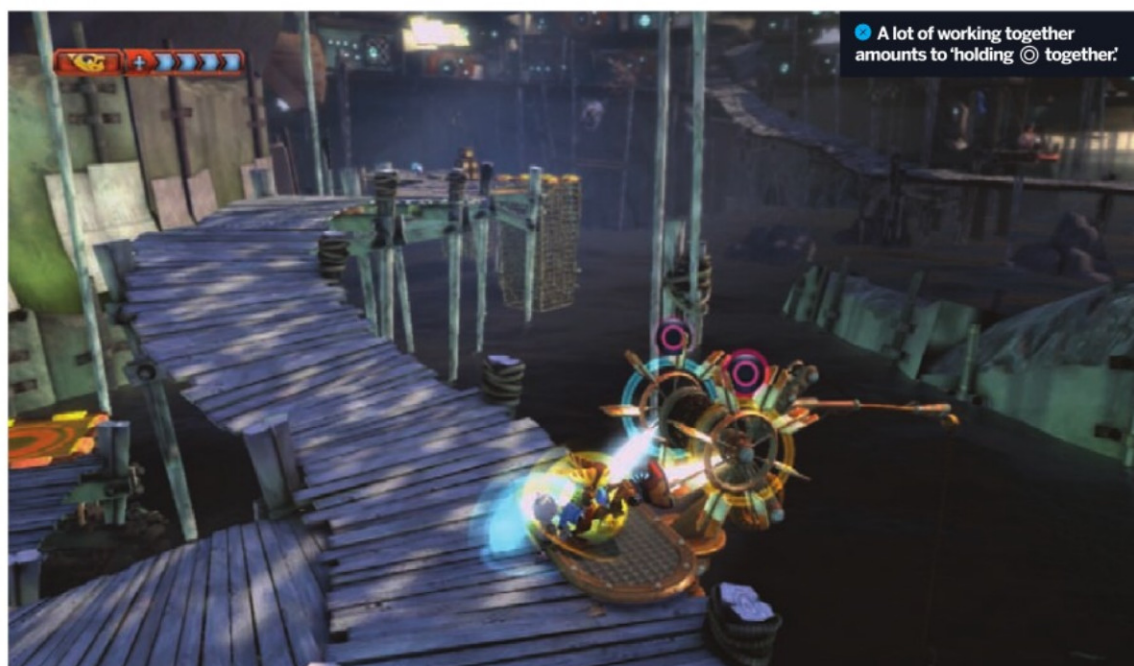


Trine Issue 184
A far better, far cheaper take on
multiplayer platforming. **85%**



It generally doesn't feel as pretty as other R&C games. This is nice, though.

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One



A lot of working together amounts to 'holding @ together'.



jump back over, forcing you to do it again... irritations, not failings. Not frequent enough to be a real cause for complaint, true. But so very annoying when they do come up it shows how this is just not meant to be a game you play alone. Plus, if you were to play it on yer tod, the character select screen with its four available slots would just be looking at you, mocking. Poor, lonely you.

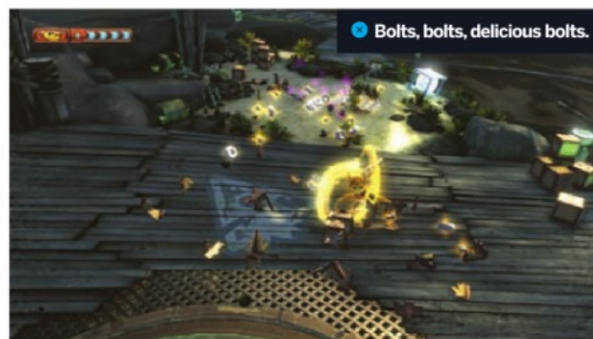
It's difficult to go either way with any real conviction when it comes to *Ratchet & Clank All 4 One*. In the bad side of town it's boring, derivative and simple. On the other side of the tracks it's an interesting and unique prospect on PS3 – when played in multiplayer – and real fun can be had with it. So it's boring, but fun. It's simplistic, but satisfying. Alone it's shoddy, together it's half-decent. If you have friends willing to play it with you, *All 4 One* could be a decent purchase (on the cheap). If you're lonely but looking for some new platformer action, it's really not worth your time. Make of that what you will.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Blandness and boredom combine when played alone, but throw in three friends and it becomes a minor hoot. All in all, though, it's just not that great a platformer – only look into it if you're desperate for multiplayer jump-'em-up action.

68%



Bolts, bolts, delicious bolts.



At first things like this are interesting. At first.

BANG, BANG, YOU'RE DEAD

There's 15 bullets in your head

WHAT WOULD A *Ratchet & Clank* game be without weaponry? A piece of garbage that misses the point of the other games in the series, that's what. *All 4 One* dodges this particular Combuster shell by bringing back a few old favourites (Mr Zurkon!) along with some interesting new shooters that don't just deal in straightforward shooting (Critic Strike!). It's a shame, then, that you are likely to just rely on the basic hand cannon along with a few rocket launcher blasts for good measure. Though maybe that's just us being boring and unimaginative.





DETAILS

Publisher
Disney Interactive Studios
Developer
High Impact Games
Price
£39.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Platformer
Age Rating
7
Website
<http://bit.ly/pRJbIR>
Twitter
@DisneyGames
Facebook
facebook.com/DisneyInteractiveStudios



It's simplistic, but sometimes there are elements involving thought.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Phineas And Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension

This second dimension must be one where kids games aren't pump



The obligatory 'just for kids' bit in every review of games for the little 'uns looks a bit silly when the game in question contains references to movies like *Aliens* and – get this – is actually consistently funny. Such a promising start, but *Phineas And Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension* – based on the Disney movie of the same name (based on the TV series) – soon falls into the traps we expected. It's simplistic and easy, your partner is an idiot when the AI controls them and there's no real need to replay it once you've shot through its blindingly swift collection of different dimensions.

But to rest on those laurels would be to ignore the fact it's actually quite good fun. Taking a leaf from the *Ratchet & Clank* series, which High Impact developed a couple of spin-offs to, clearly pays off. Weapons are interesting and upgradeable, combat is fast and satisfying and it looks really rather nice, with each dimension having a very individualistic character to it. Throw in the co-op touch that harks back to *Lego Star Wars* and you're onto another fine selling point: you can play it *with* the kid it was bought for. As the blocky Jedi have taught us: this can be a lot of fun.

Developers take note – more kids games like this in the future, please, and we'll be very happy indeed.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

It's simplistic and very short, but it hits the same sorts of notes as the *Lego Star Wars* and *Ratchet & Clank* series, making it surprisingly good fun. Also: making your gun woof every time it fires will never not be funny.

66%



DETAILS

Publisher
dtp entertainment
Developer
Kylotonn Entertainment
Price
£39.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Hack-'n'-slash
Age Rating
18
Website
thecursedcrusade.com
Twitter
@dtp_entertains
Facebook
facebook.com/TheCursedCrusade

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The Cursed Crusade

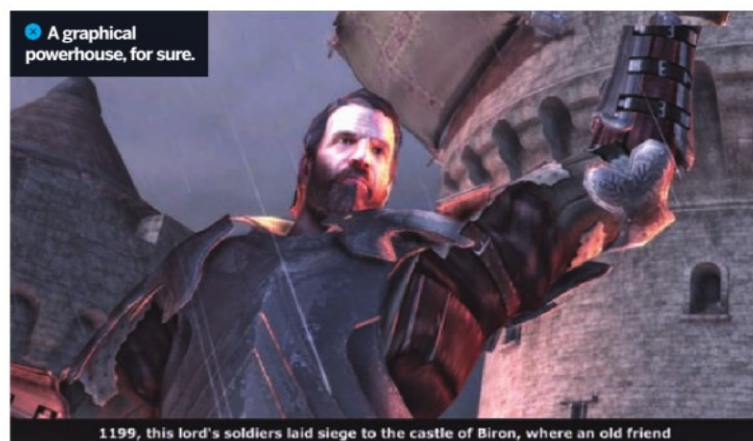
Hack, slash, it's all in the mind



By now you've probably had a quick glance around this half-page review and thought 'nahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh'. We can't blame you: there's nothing really interesting or exciting about *The Cursed Crusade* when you're actually playing it, let alone looking at some rather drab-looking screens.

Despite the fact that it's about as engaging as a night spent with someone who's recently broken up with their other half, it's not totally awful: just another low-rent, low-budget fantasy

hack-'n'-slasher that's probably going to sell like hot cakes on the German market. Everything about it screams 'budget', from the presentation – the characters' hair looks like coloured-in cotton wool that's been Sellotaped to someone's head, and graphically it looks like a rejected prototype for PS2 game *Hunter: The Reckoning Wayward* – to the controls and the enemies that attack you one at a time as if they're auditioning for a part in a Steven Seagal flick.



A graphical powerhouse, for sure.

1199, this lord's soldiers laid siege to the castle of Biron, where an old friend

For those interested enough, however (hallo, und herzlich willkommen auf Magazin Play) there are combat upgrade trees to navigate as well as a different 'planes' of existence which grant extra combat abilities. The bottom line, however, is that there are far better hack-'n'-slashers out there, and *The Cursed Crusade* just doesn't cut it. Or hack it, even. Ha!

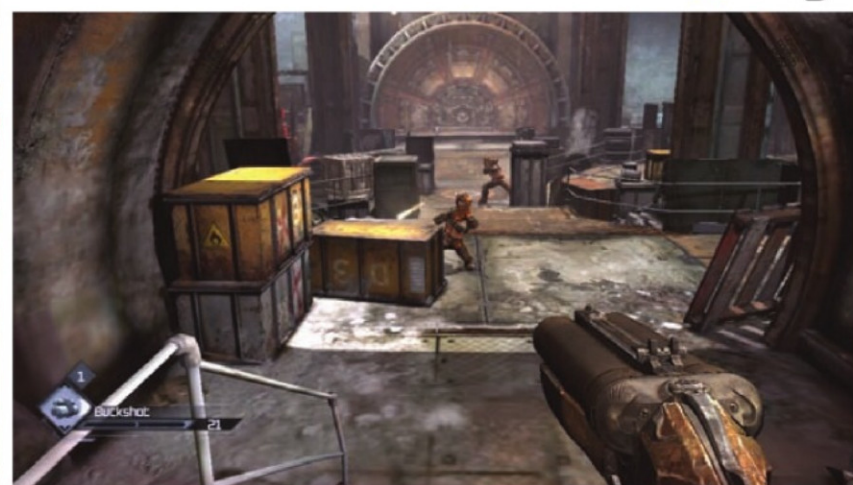
Steve Burns

VERDICT

Not the worst game ever made, just doing a very good job of mimicking it on first impressions. There's some enjoyment to be had – killing someone with a hulking great broadsword has never *not* been fun – but there's simply not enough here.

40%





For all its faults the core shooting is still satisfying.

Chamber Of Laughs
Time: 00:29:50
Phase Money: 9
Per Time: 01:45:00



At times, the game does look stunning but it's mostly incredibly disappointing.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Rage

Rage: against the machine



DETAILS

Publisher
Bethesda Softworks
Developer
id Software
Price
£49.99
Players
1-4
Genre
FPS
Age Rating
15
Website
www.rage.com
Twitter
@idSoftware
Facebook
facebook.com/idsoftware



After five long and hype-filled years of hearing how *Rage* was going to be the future of everything, it's finally here. Unsurprisingly to those who played id Software's last game, *Doom 3*, it's not the future of anything: conversely it's rooted to the past and generally is one of the most boring games ever to have had half a decade of development poured into it.

The developer has been crowing on about how good *Rage*'s graphics are for years, but those looking for a game to show off their hardware are in for a shock: the game looks like a bag of sick in any expansive location. Indoor areas fare much better, but outdoors you'll be privy to some of the worst texture streaming on PS3, with the environment literally getting drawn around you as you play, textures popping in with the frequency and welcome of your in-laws, a phenomenally distracting flaw. Sometimes the menus appear out of focus. There's so many jagged edges that it's amazing that the game isn't cross-promoted with Band-Aid plasters. It's astonishing it was released in this state.

Like *Borderlands* and *Fallout 3*, *Rage* riffs on the same *Mad Max*-inspired post-apocalyptic

wasteland setting. Unlike those two, it does nothing interesting with it. The first-person combat is strong enough, as you would expect from some of the creators of *Doom* and *Quake*. Unfortunately, id has decided that the best way for it to break up the satisfying

One of the most boring games ever to have had half a decade of development poured into it

shooting action is to have players spend most of their time milling around boring, uninteresting towns or indulging in yet another tedious drive across the absolutely barren wasteland to get to the next FPS section.

It's an absolutely insane decision that frustrates in a way guaranteed to provoke the emotion of the title. The towns, hub worlds where your missions are received, have the appearance of depth but none of the flavour, simply devolving into a series of over-extended fetch quests before you can get on with the business of shooting people. The driving and wasteland sections are equally redundant: mechanically they're fine, but serve no other

purpose than to pad the experience as you drive across a featureless and dull desert on your way to (hopefully) the next area that contains some on-foot combat, the only thing that *Rage* does well at all.

Shooter (and id Software) fans will wonder why it takes so long to get into the action, and we wonder how it took five years to create. There's some enjoyment to be had here, but extracting it is far too much like busywork. Add in a lack of multiplayer modes (only four players as well) and you've got what can only be described as a disappointment.

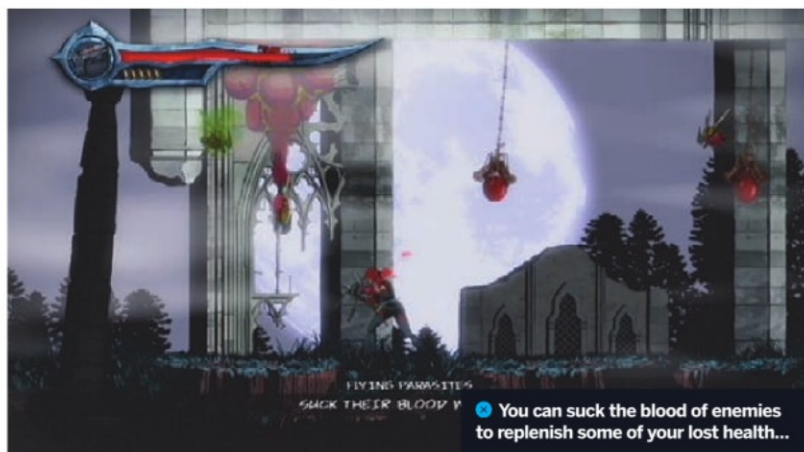
Steve Burns

VERDICT

There's a much better game lurking within *Rage*'s frustrating structure, and if id had simply strung together a series of FPS sections with cut-scenes linking them then this would be a much better experience. Instead there's too much padding separating the FPS elements, making grinding through pointless objectives just to get to them a chore.

60%





DETAILS

Publisher
Majesco
Developer
WayForward
Release Date
Out now
Price
£9.99
Players
1-16
Genre
Beat-'em-up
Website
bloodrayne
betrayal.com
Twitter
@BloodRayne
Game
Facebook
facebook.com/
bloodrayne

BloodRayne: Betrayal

An epic hack-'n'-slash to get your teeth into, or in dire need of a gameplay transfusion?

AFTER A COUPLE of rubbish games and a slew of even crapper films, *BloodRayne* returns, reinvented and reinvigorated, on PS3. Before you all go off to sharpen your stakes, though, it's worth noting that WayForward, who has expertly handled this reboot, has ditched the 3D visuals of the game's two PS2 predecessors and gone stylish and cel-shaded in a high-octane, 2D hack-'n'-suck adventure that bares more than a passing resemblance to some of the old *Castlevania* games.

The gameplay is simple, get from one end of the level to the other slashing, dismembering and biting all of the enemies that crowd around you to prevent the level from shunting onward until you have successfully mashed them all into a bloody pulp. You have a nice variety of moves at your disposal with which to exert sprawling chains of execution, including slashes, air-stomps and, if all else fails, pistol fire. But within minutes of starting play, serious flaws begin to surface from the crypts of *Betrayal*'s

predecessors, namely a lack of fluidity to the combat. Sure, our flame-haired vampiress looks and appears to move like a well-oiled Olympic gymnast, but putting her arsenal of attacks into effect against the enemy hordes too often results in flabby, wheezy gameplay that lacks the fluidity of its sharper-toothed peers, such as the *Devil May Cry* games.

The game is also brutally hard, which ultimately compounds your misery as there is no let-off in the difficulty by way of lessening the level, meaning you're forced to keep replaying the early, somewhat uninspiring chapters as you get to grips with the controls and ultimately come up short against the denizens of hell-spawn that you frequently come up against.

VERDICT

A great-looking scrolling fighter with plenty of bite, but ultimately it's just too sluggish to do its flawless presentation much justice. **62%**

DETAILS

Publisher
Ubisoft
Entertainment
SA
Developer
Ubisoft
Release Date
Out now
Price
£11.99
Players
1
Genre
Sandbox
Website
from-dust.ubi.
com/from-
dust/en-GB/
home/
Twitter
@Ubisoft
Facebook
facebook.com/
fromdustgame

From Dust

Protect, serve and create
in God's own sandpit...

FROM DUST IS a truly awe-inspiring game in which players take on the role of the Breath, a swirling, ground-crafting deity that serves to protect a group of rural tribesmen as they look to explore and populate a hostile, primitive world. The main idea is that you have to guide the tribesmen over seemingly uninhabitable land and lead them to Totems, around which they can create new villages and vegetation and expand their numbers. To do this you can suck up substances, such as sand, and lay it elsewhere to bridge the gaps between cliffs, pen back raging torrents of water and create pathways for your devotees to advance.

Once every required village has been established, a portal will open up that takes the tribesmen to the next map, and your next batch of problems. But that's not to say that your work on the present map is done as there is plenty for the completists here, too, and bonus points are awarded for filling the landscapes with flora and discovering lost elements of the tribe's lore, known as 'Memories'.

Needless to say, this isn't a game for everyone as a logical mind is required to forge

the required pathways and complete the tasks while also keeping the tribesmen safe.

But even the biggest boffins will be tested to the absolute limit in later levels as you're required to spin numerous plates in order to conquer maps of ever-threatening proportions – a task that's not helped by some deranged AI that sees your hapless humans drawn towards danger and certain death like moths to a halogen.

So while we applaud the concept and much of *From Dust*'s execution, including some lip-smackingly gorgeous visuals and a suitably ambient array of sound effects, we can't imagine that the majority of gamers will come away contented. But as an art form, *From Dust* ranks up there with some of the best acclaimed, yet largely ignored by the paying public, games ever created.

VERDICT

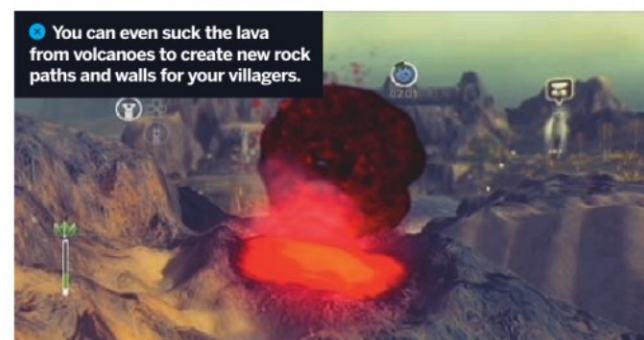
A beautiful game with plenty of good intentions, but a near-vertical learning curve and some baffling AI render it art more than enjoyment. **82%**



No, that's not a Meerkat, it's a Totem that you must lead your tribesmen to so that they can go forth and multiply.



When the Breath is near a man, press [LB] to zoom in on him.



You can even suck the lava from volcanoes to create new rock paths and walls for your villagers.

DETAILS

Publisher Sega
Developer Avalanche Studios
Release Date Out now
Price £7.99
Players 1-4
Genre Shoot-'em-up
Website sega.com/games/rene-gade-ops
Twitter @SEGA
Facebook facebook.com/pages/Renegade-Ops/100843426671728

Renegade Ops

A vehicular combat game from the makers of Just Cause – you know what that means – destruction on a colossal scale

ALTHOUGH THERE ARE countless games with which *Renegade Ops* can be compared to, *Robotron* on wheels is a fair-enough summary that should create mental images of multi-directional shooting in a vehicle. Toss in sprawling maps, destructible scenery, missions and secondary objectives and some ground-spanning weapons and you're pretty much there.

You pick one of four characters, each with their own signature vehicle and then drive into a war zone of raining missiles, hard-to-shake bullet-spraying jeeps and tanks and countless other gun installations that can belch out bullets at an equal frequency to your vehicle, which means that precision driving is required to stay alive long enough to complete an objective, let alone a mission. This is not a game for casual gamers. No, really it isn't, because if you play it on the 'Casual' difficulty then the soul gets ripped out of the experience – namely Damage Streaks and the levelling up of characters, both of which

give purpose to the carnage and prevent this game from getting quite as boring, as quickly.

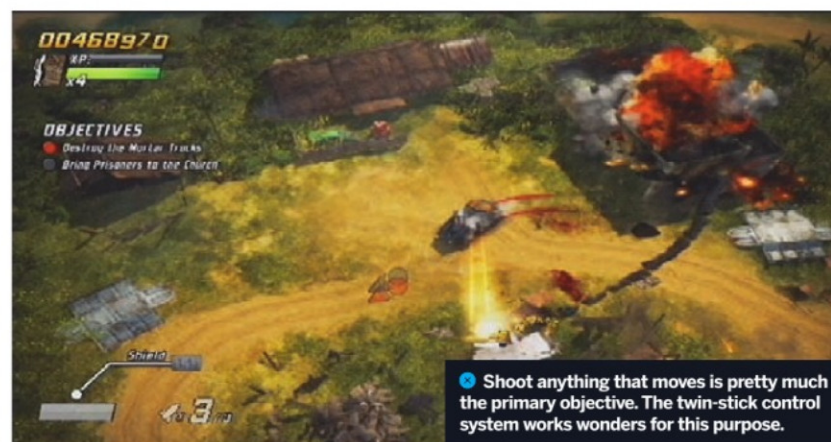
The top-down graphics are nicely detailed with plenty of nice touches and flourishes to look out for, not least the way in which your ever-widening spew of gunfire rips through the scenery. The twin-stick control system also works well, with vehicle steering controlled by the left and 360-degree gunfire determined by the right.

But four missions into the nine and the overriding urge to turn it off will consume you. Not for good, but from then on in tackling one mission per day is probably just enough repetitive destruction for anyone to handle.

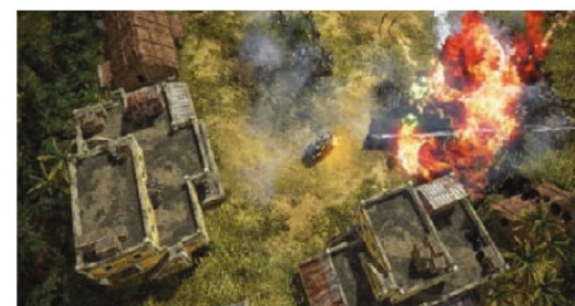
VERDICT

Great fun in small doses, but the missions soon become a bit of a grind and as such your enjoyment is restricted to short bursts.

78%



Shoot anything that moves is pretty much the primary objective. The twin-stick control system works wonders for this purpose.



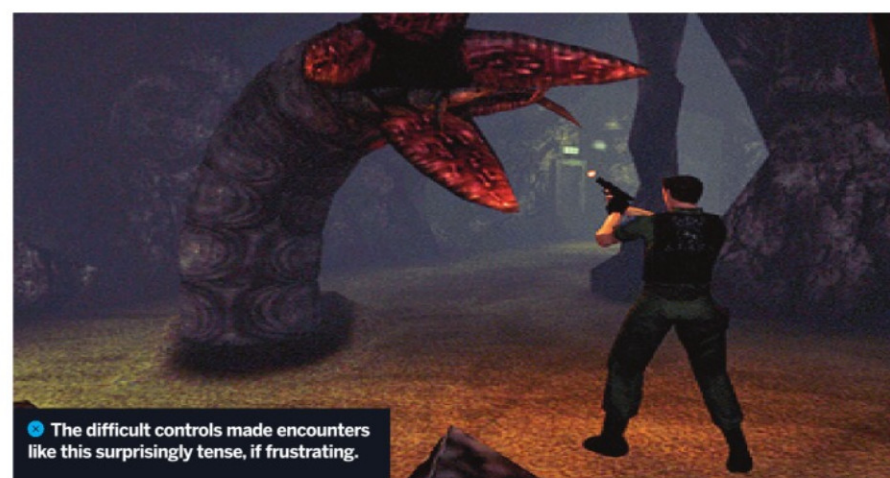
DETAILS

Publisher EA
Developer Criterion Games
Release Date Out now
Price £7.99
Players 1
Genre Crashing
Website www.criteriongames.com/CRASH
Twitter @CriterionGames
Facebook facebook.com/criteriongames

Burnout Crash

HEY LOOK, IT'S the perfect game for your smartphone or tablet: easily playable in small doses, simple to learn but difficult to master. But it's not out on your smartphone or tablet, as it's on PSN instead... which is confusing. Anyway, *Burnout Crash* takes the action to a top-down view and strips out any pretensions of racing. Instead it relies on furiously addictive score attacks focused around busy junctions – crash into the cars driving past, blow yourself up to keep the pile-up going and take down surrounding structures to make your destructive total go even higher. It's definitely addictive and also a lot of fun in small doses, but there's very little variation and – even with explosions everywhere – it does get a bit boring after a while of play. It's not like we were expecting the most deeply deep depth game ever made, but it's still slightly irksome. But, yes – it's also a lot of fun, no doubt.

79%



The difficult controls made encounters like this surprisingly tense, if frustrating.

DETAILS

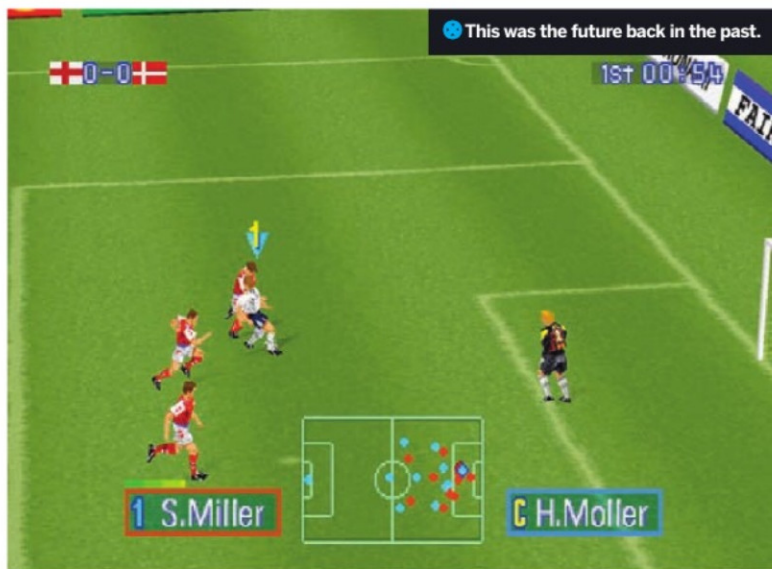
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom
Release Date Out now
Price £11.99
Players 1
Genre Survival horror
Website www.capcom-unity.com
Twitter @capcom_unity
Facebook facebook.com/CapcomUnity

Resident Evil Code Veronica X

HERE'S A THEORY to think about. Survival-horror games were scary because they were so very, very flawed. The limited saving, the inventory restrictions and those notorious controls that would prompt us to wheel out the old 'you turn like an oil tanker' cliché if only we'd ever actually seen one turn. Those same mechanics that made *Resident Evil* scary because they left you vulnerable now give *Code Veronica X* a nostalgic if dated glow. It's going to be off-putting for newcomers because it's an awkward mess in the context of modern gaming's drive for slick controls but regardless, it's strangely familiar and reminiscent of a different era for everyone else.

72%

UNDER THE INFLUENCE... The games that changed it all



ISS Pro

- Release date July 1997 • Publisher Konami • Developer KCET
- Games it influenced Every football game that has ever been made



IT MAY SEEM unlikely or even flat-out quaint, but the all-conquering *FIFA* series was once the bitch of a football game designed by a small Japanese team that

imaginations filled in the rest. It worked, and for the time it was brilliant.

Football games were in a state of flux around this time: the old consoles were dead or dying off, and it was time for a developer to embrace the new generation.

Whereas EA stumbled, releasing the ghastly, two-second-button-lag-filled *FIFA 97* (Ginola on the cover though, so there's always that) to next-gen consoles, Konami grasped the nettle by its thorns and overhead-kicked the entire bush. Which doesn't even make sense, but that's how stupendous the achievement was.

Every *PES* (and *FIFA*) game traces its lineage back through this game, and while it has aged pretty badly its nearest sequels are still very playable. The reason? They're arcade fun with just enough realism to make you think that you're playing 'real' football when in actuality you're just picking Brazil, giving the ball to Bobby Carlos and watching him hare

down the wing before whipping a pinpoint cross right onto the head of (the real) Ronaldo.

Playing it again, it's not really much like real football, but who cares? It was fun, and multiplayer would forge lifelong friendships or drive deep wedges between people, which is surely to be commended. Best of all, *ISS Pro* has some of the most incredibly bad commentary in the history of humans talking. To see you off, we've added a few examples to the pull quote, best shouted like a manic raccoon for full effect.

WHAT WE SAID: Issue 22 • 84%
 "One of the best games on PSX."



'AND IT'S OFF HIS BOOT!'
 'THAT BOY MUST HAVE A STEEL SKULL!'
 'SCORCHIO!'

Maybe it was the chunky polygonal player models that managed to capture the essence of their counterparts despite looking like they'd been assembled in Duplo. Maybe it was the refined passing game that had been introduced since the previous iteration, *ISS Deluxe* on SNES, MegaDrive and PlayStation.

It was a big change, as *ISS Deluxe*'s passing was stilted and robotic. Now we're not saying that *ISS*'s wasn't as well – playing it now is like watching a flip book of drawings of what a stupid person thinks football *might* be – but at the time it was a revelation, and our feverish

IT WILL NEVER COME TO PSN #1



Animal Soccer World

- **Release date** 2005
- **Developer** Phoenix Games

BEFORE YOU READ this, please ensure that you're sitting down. Because what we're about to lay on you is so heavy that you might actually die.

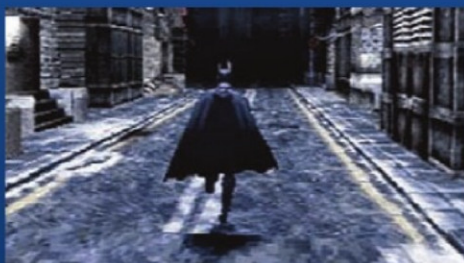
Laugh it up now, because your twisted brain won't be able to think, let alone laugh once we tell you about the twisted majesty that is *Animal Soccer World*.

This 'game' is essentially every nightmare ever dreamt rolled into one big Freddy Krueger-shaming monstrosity. The 'plot' follows a bunch of cartoon animals (surprise) shamelessly nicked from Disney's back catalogue organising

a football match. The two sides – The Wild Dogs and The Jungle Kings – aren't exactly best of friends, and a bitter rivalry ensues...

...which is played out via the medium of terrible, creepy animation, horrible voice acting (there was only one voice actor for the whole production) and some mind-bending music. There's not even any playable football in it, just some colouring in nonsense. Let us put it to you this way: once the CIA find out about this, it'll become its go-to torture resistance training tool for new agents.

BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY [CIRCA 1998]



YOU MIGHT NOT remember *Batman & Robin*, which crawled its way onto PlayStation back in 1998, so that's why we're here now. Reminding you. It was the first real open-world *Batman* (take that *Arkham City*!) but oh dear. Cars exploded when they drove into a stationary Batmobile, the buildings wobbled as you drove and Batman waddled like he cacked his pants and didn't want to smudge. Which wasn't how he was described in the brief to the *Batman & Robin* animation team.



WE COULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT...

Backyard Wrestling

WAY BACK IN the cultural wasteland of the early 2000s (nu-metal was at its zenith...) the backyard wrestling craze of stupid fools imitating WWE began to slow down as everybody realised that human heads aren't meant to bend that way. So what did Eidos do? Make a videogame based on it! Good call.

Now this 'sport' has been around since the dawn of time, or at least pro wrestling: after all, who reading this didn't watch WWE when they were younger and then immediately run out and power bomb their friends into submission? Exactly. So an ultra-violent, no-rules version of that in game form should have been fine. Sadly, it wasn't.

This was a barely playable shock-'em-up that was fun for two minutes before the sight of hitting an American frat-boy with a wooden plank tired, yet it sold by the bucketload. Sigh. A sequel was produced, but thankfully we've not heard from the series since 2004, and we'll be glad to keep it that way thanks.

RETRO GAMES WE SAID WE WANT TO PLAY AGAIN BUT PROBABLY WON'T



Jak And Dexter

YEAH, THIS IS still pretty good, but so what?

We've got loads of good games to play, and very little time to do it in. Here's the deal: you guys play it again, send us a review (let's say 150 words) and we'll definitely print it. Definitely (not).



Detective Barbie: The Mystery Cruise

OKAY, WE NEVER played this, but we found a copy the other day and considered sticking it on. That was before we read the blurb: 'Use the Crime Computer to help crack the case.' No way, Barbie.



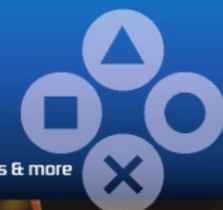
Time Crisis

WILD DOG! RICHARD MILLER! Derrr der der
derrr der der derrrrrrrrrr! G-Con 45! Using the
PlayStation pad as a foot pedal! These were great
things when we were young, but sadly we just can't
see ourselves going back to it. Sorry, Wild Dog.



Wu-Tang: Taste The Pain

QUITE POSSIBLY THE most Nineties game in existence, this was *50 Cent: Bulletproof* before *50 Cent: Bulletproof*. A four-player fighter with the Clan kicking ass to the beats of their own music, it wasn't awful. But we're just not cool with that level of self-involvement, dog.



DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION EASTER EGGS

You can just imagine the creative meetings in Montreal as the development team worked on *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*. The word 'No' probably wasn't used very much, certainly not in relation to people sneaking in references to their favourite shows, books, movies, games or just about anything they could possibly think of. Influences pervade the entire project, from the look and feel of the environment to the sheer number of little references littered throughout the world. It would be impossible to list them all, but we've brought you a mix of the weird, the wonderful and the obscure.



BLADE RUNNER

It's the clearest, most obvious influence on the game, from the bit where you first enter Jensen's apartment and the golden light streams in from the slowly opening shutters to the argument about mankind losing its humanity. There are a lot of less obvious nods to the film and the books behind it, such as the numerous logins and passwords you can find in various places.

One such login is PDICK, referring to Philip K Dick, the author of *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?*, which is the story *Blade Runner* is based on. Incidentally, the password for this character's computer is Lectorlamb,

another reference to the same work. Yet another one is the user RDECKARD, who is the character played by Harrison Ford, and whose password is Unicorn, which, if you watched the director's cut, is the beast featuring in his own dreams.

Blade Runner isn't the only sci-fi reference you might find among the myriad of computer logins you'll encounter. Another is HELLISON, referring to Harlan Ellison, who ancient point-and-click fans might remember as being the author of *I Have No Mouth, And I Must Scream*, and JBALLARD, author of *Crash* and *Empire Of The Sun*. Which aren't exactly sci-fi, but are still worth mentioning.

OTHER MOVIES

As main character Adam Jensen is essentially a robotic policeman, it seems only natural that one might be able to find references to the seminal *RoboCop* movie franchise. And what do you know, there is one. Exploring Detroit PD's offices (*RoboCop* was set in Detroit, of course), there's a sign indicating that the office next to it is occupied by one Alex Murphy, the man who ended up being the base for the title character.

In fact, if you are to enter his office, he'll be involved in a conversation with a colleague extolling the virtues of an Eighties film about a cop who turns into

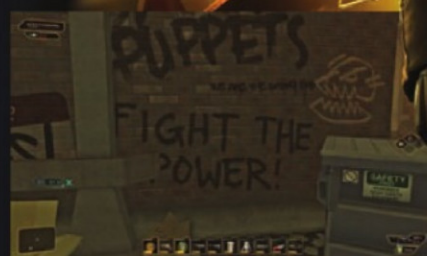
a robot. Murphy claims never to have heard of it, not being a fan of sci-fi.

One of the biotics firms in-game is named Kusanagi. Motoko Kusanagi is the lead character from *Ghost In The Shell*, and that anime series has been referenced by the studio as an inspiration for the game's look.

A more troubling reference is found inside the bowl of a toilet found in the Hengsha mission hub. After entering the apartment of the man you're searching for, you may (nature might call) attempt to flush the toilet and notice three seashells next to the loo. This is a reference to a famous scene from *Demolition Man*.



Here's Charlotte The Harlot. Are the other screens music references too?



MUSIC

Films aren't the only thing to get referenced in *Human Revolution*. Music fans might see references that may not be there, such as Keith Flint's haircut and Public Enemy's 'Fight The Power!' call to arms but one that definitely exists is a prostitute hanging around the streets of Detroit with the name of Charlotte the Harlot. She's named after a character

appearing on various Iron Maiden records, including their self-titled debut where she has her own song devoted to her.

Heavy metal gets another mention, too. At the end of the Omega Ranch mission, you'll find that one of the buildings is called Hangar 18. Those who like the work of ex-Metallica man Dave Mustaine will know this is the name of one of Megadeth's tracks.

But there's more to this one than just an incredibly obscure building name. Those determined enough will discover a hidden room off a blocked hallway inside, where a computer terminal, once hacked, will reveal emails mentioning lyrics to the song. The user name of the owner of said terminal is one MSTAINIE, of course. And you get a Trophy for finding this too, which is nice.



GAMES

Let us not forget the reason you're reading this magazine, and that's because you love games. And, luckily, so do the developers of *Human Revolution*. Perhaps the most obvious reference in the whole game is the poster you can find in various places detailing the most popular title of 2027, one 'Final Fantasy XXVII'. One wonders how long that takes to 'get good'.

As we've got a game with a huge PC heritage, you'll also discover references to the likes of *Half-Life* in there, specifically emails going on about the famous Black Mesa train ride, just with

Black Mesa changed to Omega Ranch, the name of the facility from *Human Revolution*.

And let's also not forget the original *Deus Ex*, which naturally gets (kind of) mentioned, again in the form of emails. Travelling about the world, you might discover messages from original *Deus Ex* characters Beth du Clare, Stanton Dowd, Morgan Everett and Joseph Manderley, the director of UNATCO in *Deus Ex* and involved heavily in the events of *Human Revolution*, albeit in a more abstract fashion here. Oh, and the main *Deus Ex* theme can be heard in various places, too.



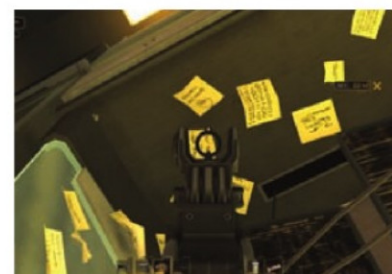
AND OTHERS



There are so many others, the surface seems to have barely been scratched, so here's a very brief going over of some others you might encounter. A character called Mr Grey has an email that suggests he'll be travelling to Wimbledon Bridge House, which to those in the know is the real-world address of Square Enix Europe.



Antique technology being framed on the walls, such as these ATI graphics cards, are a cute touch. There are spam emails sent from Nigerian banks and sex drug providers, plus an email from zerocool@planet.hack, a reference to the film *Hackers*. Eighties cop shows get a mention in the form of an email login belonging to MPOST, the composer of the theme to *Hill Street Blues*.



PC gaming in-joke Dopefish, referenced in so many other games, can be found in the Detroit sewers, a Chinese aug technician is wearing a #CHAN hat in a 4Chan reference and Pritchard has an email on his terminal referring to a failed TV show pitch where he is advised to replace his tech-savvy nerd hero with an ex-cop who still enforces the law and plays his own rules. Our own favourite? This 'Forever Alone' Post-it note.



Hatchet 2

PSN PRICE: £2.49 (rent) £11.99 (buy) **SOUND:** 5.1 Dolby Digital **DIRECTOR:** Adam Green **STARRING:** Tony Todd, Danielle Harris, Kane Hodder

THE ORIGINAL *HATCHET* was a fond tribute to the high-profile slashers of the Eighties such as *Friday The 13th* and *A Nightmare On Elm Street*. Adam Green's gory sequel continues to mix laughs with splatter and proves to be a fun continuation of the film he first dreamt up when he was just eight years old.

Immediately continuing on from the original's finale, *Hatchet 2* sees heroine Marybeth desperately trying to escape the clutches of the swamp mutant Victor Crowley. The scene is then set for some truly gruesome deaths that range from beheadings to strangling someone with their own intestines. Schlocky, bloody fun.

RATING: ★★★★★



Priest

PSN PRICE: £4.99 (rent) £14.99 (buy) **SOUND:** 5.1 Dolby Digital **DIRECTOR:** Scott Stewart **STARRING:** Paul Bettany, Stephen Moyer, Maggie Q

AFTER THE INSTANTLY forgettable *Legion*, Paul Bettany and director Scott Stewart return with another dull action flick sporting a supernatural theme. Bettany is the titular Priest who is on a one-man crusade against the vampires that now populate Earth.

While the concept itself is sound enough, *Priest* is let down by dull characters, cringe-worthy dialogue

and uninteresting monsters. It's also yet another movie, hampered by a teen-friendly rating, meaning it's nowhere near as scary as it could be.

Stewart tries hard to inject some excitement into proceedings and Bettany is always good value for money, but *Priest* just can't cut the mustard. As silly as the cross tattooed on Bettany's face.

RATING: ★★★★★



Your Highness

PSN PRICE: £4.49 (rent) £14.99 (buy) **SOUND:** 5.1 Dolby Digital **DIRECTOR:** David Gordon Green **STARRING:** James Franco, Danny McBride

YOUR HIGHNESS COULD have been *A Princess Bride* for modern times. Instead it's a slapdash comedy that's nowhere near as entertaining as it should have been. James Franco has fun as the dashing prince who's off in search of his beloved (Zoey Deschanel) but he's let down by McBride as his layabout brother and

Natalie Portman, who seems out of place among all the knob and stoner jokes. When *Your Highness* makes an effort it's hilarious, but jokes fall flat far too often. Like *Anchorman*, much of *Your Highness* was based on improvisation, but sadly the cast just aren't as funny as Will Ferrell and co.

RATING: ★★★★★



• *Rio Heist* is surprisingly entertaining and also the best film in the *Fast & Furious* series.

Fast & Furious 5: Rio Heist

Fifth time's the charm



PSN PRICE: £4.59 (rent) £14.99 (buy) **SOUND:** 5.1 Dolby Digital **DIRECTOR:** Justin Lin **STARRING:** Vin Diesel, Paul Walker, Jordana Brewster, Dwayne Johnson

Fast & Furious 5: *Rio Heist* has no right being as fun as it is. While the original film cemented both Vin Diesel and Paul Walker as action stars,

the series has progressively worsened over the intervening years.

It's something of a surprise then to discover that the fifth film is not only the best in the series, but also manages to take the ten-year old franchise in a fresh and genuinely entertaining new direction.

Following directly on from 2009's *Fast & Furious*, *Rio Heist* begins with Brian O'Connor (Walker) breaking Dominic Toretto (Diesel) out of an armoured prison bus, via a ridiculously over-the-top stunt, which sets the standards for the rest of the film's high-octane action scenes.

Still on the run from the law, Toretto, O'Connor and Toretto's sister Mia (Brewster) soon fall foul of the local kingpin when they unknowingly steal one of his prized cars – via another insane action sequence – which contains a computer chip featuring the crime lord's illegal activities.

Toretto quickly hatches a plan to steal the villain's \$100 million stash (conveniently kept in a huge safe) and, with Johnson's Agent Hobbs in hot pursuit, begins to assemble a crack heist cast from past films in the series.

While not quite the testosterone-fuelled take on *Ocean's Eleven* that director Justin Lin seems to have been aiming for, *Rio Heist* remains an insane amount of fun. This is mainly due to the

inclusion of Johnson. It's arguably his best role, allowing him to not only hone his rarely seen comedic skills, but also show off the physique that made the movie world notice him in the first place. He's a formidable presence throughout, and as he chases down Toretto he'll do anything – even smash through walls – to ensure his prey doesn't escape.

Rio Heist may be low on plot and character development, but it's fuelled by a cast who are clearly having a whale of a time and some truly insane stunts – particularly during its lengthy heist finale, which sees Toretto and Walker levelling most of Brazil's police force. Roll on *Fast & Furious 6*.



VERDICT

You won't find character development or clever dialogue, but you will find marvellous stunts, genuinely thrilling car chases and final proof that Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson made the right choice when he decided to give up wrestling in favour of acting.

RATING: ★★★★★

Movies that should be videogames

● A *Descent* videogame could give the survival-horror genre the boost it needs.



The Descent

THE SURVIVAL-HORROR genre is in something of a transitional stage at the moment. *Resident Evil 5* was enjoyable, but not a patch on part 4, while *Alone In The Dark*'s reboot was a real disappointment. We need something truly scary, something truly terrifying. Basically, we need something like *The Descent*.

First released in 2005, Neil Marshall's *Descent* saw a group of six female friends descend into a collection of previously unexplored caves. While the caves were unexplored, they weren't uninhabited, and the girls soon found themselves in a fight for their lives as they tried to escape the hairless bloodthirsty humanoids that lived there.

The Descent the game could either work as a squad-based third-person romp with you making do with limited weapons and resources, or as a single-player experience where you're desperately trying to reach the surface, while searching for your missing friends. Either way we'd love to see someone attempt to make it.

Terrible videogame movie of the month

IS DIRECTOR PAUL WS Anderson even trying any more? His latest *Resident Evil* flick is a truly turgid effort involving clones, a rubbish Wesker and truly awful effects. Sadly, it's mass market appeal (\$296m gross off a \$60m budget means another is already on the way).



Classic Blu-ray Fantastic Blu-rays you need to have in your collection

#10 Lord Of The Rings trilogy

Price: £59.99 Sound: DTS-HD 7.1 Director: Peter Jackson Starring: Elijah Wood, Ian McKellen, Viggo Mortensen

AS BLU-RAY BECOMES ever more popular, more and more classic franchises are starting to appear on the high-definition format. One of the most popular has been Peter Jackson's *The Lord Of The Rings* trilogy, so popular in fact that two versions of the films are currently available on Blu-ray; the 2010 theatrical cuts and the recently released extended cuts.

It's the extended cuts we're featuring here and while they're a relatively pricey £59.99 they do boast gorgeous transfers, thunderously good audio and a ridiculous amount of bonus features. Yes, it's an extremely pricey boxset, but

it's also a lavish one, giving you a unique insight into the popular trilogy.

Based on the famous and supposedly unfilmable novels of JRR Tolkien, *The Lord Of The Rings* follows Frodo Baggins (the elfish Elijah Wood) as he attempts to destroy the 'One Ring'. Aply protected by a ragtag group of adventurers including Gandalf The Grey (Ian McKellen) and Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen), it's a fantastic series of adventures that still manage to impress a decade on. Here's hoping the incoming *Star Wars* and *Jurassic Park* Blu-ray collections will fare just as well in high definition.

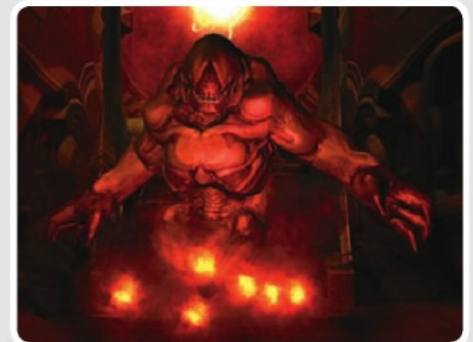
The actors we really wanted in videogames

If you're going to make a videogame into a movie then it's important to make sure you have a decent character for the main role. Angelina Jolie was fine as Lara Croft, but many chosen actors just don't cut the mustard. Join us then as we pick the right choices.



Nathan Fillion as Nathan Drake

SO WHAT IF he's a little older? The star of *Firefly* and *Serenity* would make an excellent Nathan Drake. Dashing, charming, fit and funny, he's been our choice for the part ever since the *Uncharted* film was first announced. Here's hoping Mark Wahlberg eventually changes his mind.



Vin Diesel as Sarge

DOOM WAS AN early vehicle for Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson. Sadly, it wasn't a very good movie, due to Johnson just not convincing as the hard ass space marine. We'd have plumped for Vin Diesel instead. He's still nice and buff, a far better actor and a huge videogame fan to boot as *Pitch Black: Escape From Butcher Bay* proved.



Jedward as Guile

JEAN-CLAUDE VAN Damme might have had the muscles, but there was one thing stopping him from really pulling off Guile – namely his hair. Step forward the annoying Irish twosome. The brothers aren't actors, but they certainly have the quiffs for it, and with any luck they might sustain grievous injuries during filming.

PLAY#x Playlist

If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

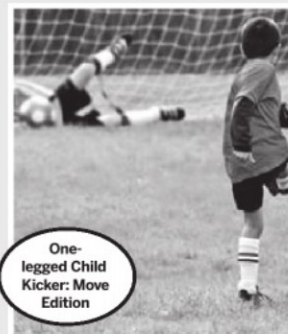
GAME UNDER

Stock photography, fictitious stories, real lives...



Move special editions we want to see...

Mega-Joust 9000: Move Edition



One-legged Child Kicker: Move Edition



Bored Board Carrier: Move Edition






Horse Fail: Move Edition





SUDDENLY, TIGER FIGHT: Move Edition

PS3 LISTING



game	issue	score
3D Collection	195	75%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	52%
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	58%
Alice: Madness Returns	207	57%
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Ape Escape	208	55%
Arcana Heart 3	207	79%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Ar Tonelico Qoga: Knell Of Ar Ciel	203	27%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
 <p>More than enough additions to take the Assassin's Creed formula into modern classic territory.</p>		
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
 <p>Single-player is fairly impressive but take it online and it's bordering on genius. This is quite possibly the best shooter on PS3 today.</p>		
Bayonetta*	187	93%
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	209	63%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blur	193	86%
Bodycount	210	54%
Borderlands	185	80%
Brink	206	67%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz!: Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
 <p>Treyarch's first genuinely brilliant entry to the series and a standard-bearer for fast-paced online shooters.</p>		
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	30%

game	issue	score
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	70%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Cars 2	208	68%
Catherine*	204	48%
Champion Jockey	210	50%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Create	199	71%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Crysis 2	204	72%
Damnation	181	38%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Island	210	79%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
 <p>The point where the Dead Space series stepped up and became something to be genuinely excited about.</p>		
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	209	91%
 <p>Worries: unfounded. Fun: lots of it. True Deus Ex experience: confirmed. Boss battles: bloody awful.</p>		
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
DiRT 3	206	85%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%
 <p>It's just like playing Guitar Hero for the first time all over again, although DJ Hero is slightly more expensive.</p>		
DJ Hero 2	198	88%
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	203	86%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Driver: San Francisco	209	68%
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	56%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
EDF: Insect Armageddon	208	64%
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	77%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%

game	issue	score
EyePet	185	83%
EyePet: Move	197	84%
F1 2010	197	86%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
 <p>Fallout 3 lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.</p>		
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
F.E.A.R. 3	208	60%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
FIFA 11	197	91%
FIFA 12	210	86%
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
FIFA World Cup 2010	192	70%
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
 <p>Two of the greatest PS2 action games of all time come together at a bargain price. Essential purchase.</p>		
God Of War Collection: Volume II	210	70%
God Of War III	190	88%
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
 <p>Two fine expansions bundled together and without the need for GTA IV to play them. What more could you want.</p>		
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
 <p>Guitar Hero III is another great rhythm-action beast, sure to delight fans and newcomers alike. So, grab a guitar and rock out!</p>		
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1	200	21%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2	208	37%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter: The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
 <p>It will certainly split opinion, but we absolutely love it. A valuable addition to the wonderful world of gaming.</p>		
Heavy Rain: Move Edition	198	70%

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Bodycount PS3	54%	Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine PS3	51%
Champion Jockey PS3	50%		
Dead Island PS3	79%	Comix Zone PSN	62%
FIFA 12 PS3	86%	Crazy Machines Elements PSN	71%
God Of War Collection: Volume II PS3	70%	Medal Of Honor: Frontline PSN	52%
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus Classics HD PS3	94%	Resident Evil 4 HD PSN	93%
NHL 12 PS3	78%	The Baconing PSN	72%
PES 2012 PS3	74%		
Resistance 3 PS3	88%		
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Classics Trilogy HD PS3	78%		

game	issue	score
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Homefront	203	69%
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus Classics HD	210	94%
Largely ignored when they were first released, gamers can now enjoy these wonderful games in brilliant HD.		
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
inFamous	180	81%
inFamous 2	207	83%
International Cricket 2010	194	61%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
John Daly's ProStroke Golf	197	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Killzone 3	202	80%
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	20%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
L.A. Noire	206	91%
Not perfect but Rockstar's new IP introduces pioneering facial-capture technology and interesting gameplay.		
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	76%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%
An amazing game and something to get involved with even if you can't create your own stuff.		
Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
LOTR: Conquest	175	52%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
Madden NFL 11	196	84%
Madden NFL 12	209	85%
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	189	68%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel Vs Capcom 3	202	88%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
Why the hell are you reading this when you should be playing Mass Effect 2 instead? GO GO GO.		
Medal Of Honor	198	86%

game	issue	score
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Not the final Metal Gear Solid game after all then. Still brilliant though, and still largely incomprehensible.		
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
A questionable single-player mode is rendered null and void by the best multiplayer we've ever played.		
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	202	38%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
The best kart racer by far on the PlayStation 3, but combined with incredible levels of creativity. If you love LBP you'll love this, too.		
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat	205	81%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
Moto GP 10/11	204	64%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
MX Vs ATV: Alive	206	42%
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
naïd	201	61%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA 2K11	199	82%
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
Hot Pursuit is one of the best arcade racers of all time – pure, unadulterated bliss in game form.		
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
Nier	192	54%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	198	89%
NHL 12	210	78%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	75%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	172	80%
PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%

game	issue	score
PES 2012	210	74%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Portal 2	205	95%
Another exceptional realisation from Valve, gamers are going to be talking about Portal 2 for a long time to come.		
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	194	69%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Racket Sports	198	37%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	203	54%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
Relocates the familiar GTA formula to a superbly realised new setting and, in many ways, is unlike anything else as a result.		
Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare	199	87%
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	190	86%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
With its impressive set pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, Resistance 2 is one of the best FPSs on the PS3.		
Resistance 3	210	88%
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
With the incredible tracklist, tweaked engine, and new modes, this is easily the best rhythm-action game currently available.		
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Rugby World Cup 2011	209	49%
R.U.S.E.	197	82%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
SBK 2011	206	70%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%
Simply the best rally game on the PS3. Unless simulation is your bag then you'll want to go for Colin McRae. Not much in it, really.		
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
Simpsons Game	160	82%
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Guitar	199	70%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%

*denotes import review

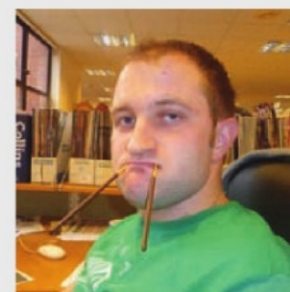
PLAY'S DIARY



DAY 15, 0930 HOURS It's no surprise that, on a routine visit to Japan, Pocky has been acquired. Pocky is important to any games journalist's diet, and going without it for too long can be harmful in too many ways to list here.



DAY 15, 1024 HOURS Little under an hour later, and the frenzied feeding session has begun. The entire office begins filtering over – first a trickle, soon a veritable deluge of Pocky-craving, half-crazed swine. It's not a pretty sight, but it is absolutely necessary.



DAY 15, 1337 HOURS The mass Pocky consumption spreads to other departments, leaving the realms of pure games journalism and entering other roles, such as Super Sub Dan here. Or, as he's now known, The Surliest Walrus In The World. He now has the Pocky Hunger.



DAY 15, 1800 HOURS The end of the day comes and there's not much left to see – hardly any evidence that there was once a treasure trove of Pocky here. It has been devoured; gorged on. But the satisfaction won't last, and soon enough the Pocky Hunger will return.

The Tokyo in your mind vs The Tokyo in real life



THE TOKYO IN YOUR MIND

The Tokyo that lives in the deepest recesses of your mind is a complex place, full of floating things, bright lights of the neon variety and a general feeling that this is The Future. It's a place where you'll see things you won't see at home for at least ten years. It's a lot like the real Tokyo, really, except with more floating things. Where it differs in your mind, however, is that this Tokyo is a place where vicious biker gangs roam the highways, chopping off heads with gay abandon and (eventually) shouting "TETSUOOOOO!" a lot. A lot. It's a place with flying cars, it's probably got some kind of steampunk influence and basically it looks like *Blade Runner*, *Akira*, a bit of *Judge Dredd*, *Syndicate* and everything else that looks like that. Essentially it's a gigantic videogame in your mind, and it's a wonderful place as a result.



THE TOKYO IN REAL LIFE

The Tokyo that resides in a more actual, real place – real life – is a different beast to that you might imagine on a cold and windy October evening when you sit alone in your underpants whistling along to Bruce Springsteen and wishing things had been a little bit different for you that week. Wait, what? Anyway, the real-world Tokyo is one of bright lights of the neon variety, a general feeling that this is The Future and – crucially – less murderous biker gangs than in your mind. In fact, we have yet to see any in our time in the city and have, in fact, been confronted with nothing other than Really Very Polite people. While that may come as a letdown to some, it does at least look a bit like *Blade Runner*, *Akira*, *Syndicate* et al. So yeah, there's that.

Tokes/Tokyo

game	issue	score
Singularity	195	80%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Soul Calibur IV	169	94%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%
Just beating <i>Blur</i> to the chequered flag, <i>Split/Second</i> is a wonderfully intense racing game in the <i>Burnout</i> mould.		
Sports Champions	196	83%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
The fact that you're buying a lot of stuff you've probably bought already is the only drawback to what is the best fighter ever made.		
Tekken 6	184	94%
There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, nothing, stops <i>Tekken 6</i> from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game.		
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
The Club	163	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
This proves once and for all that Western RPGs are better than Japanese ones! Sort of. Whatever, <i>Oblivion</i> is an awesome game.		
The Fight	199	42%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The Orange Box	161	93%
The Saboteur	187	67%
The Shoot	199	76%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Thor: God Of Thunder	206	38%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	194	60%
Tiger Woods PGA 12: The Masters	204	65%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.	177	75%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	196	69%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Classics Trilogy HD	210	78%
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%

game	issue	score
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon	208	64%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	199	53%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UEFA EURO 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
Undisputed is gorgeous to look at, it's incredibly deep, and it's one of the most addictive fighters we've played in ages.		
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
Among Thieves has proven itself to be a real work of class. It's one of the best games in recent years.		
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vanquish	197	93%
A brilliant surprise from the developer of <i>Bayonetta</i> and easily one of the best games we've played in 2010.		
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine	210	51%
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	207	49%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WSC Real 11	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2009	173	74%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2010	185	77%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2011	199	63%
X-Blades	178	54%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%
Yostar 2: In The Movies	204	60%

PS STORE LISTING

1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Classic, frantic and utterly brilliant arcade action from Sega. A fine example of what the company is best known for.		
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	82%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%

game	issue	score
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Beat Sketcher	201	85%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	86%
Bishi Bashi Special!	175	61%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
Blacklight: Tango Down	200	64%
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Blast Factor	152	72%
Blokus	202	54%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II	188	61%
Blue Toad Murder Files Episodes 4/5/6	193	70%
Bombberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
We had to wait quite a while, but time is what we have plenty of both with and for <i>Braid</i> . Simply brilliant.		
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Call Of Duty Classic	188	90%
It doesn't have <i>MW2</i> 's polish but it's a great game both as a slice of history and in its own right.		
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Catan	195	85%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Comix Zone	210	62%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	168	70%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer Red Alert 3 Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Costume Quest	199	70%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Crazy Machines Elements	210	71%
Crazy Taxi	200	80%
Crescent Pale Mist	200	70%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
This is yet another beautiful, cute and high-class puzzler on the PSN that works perfectly and is a joy to play.		
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Cubixx HD	207	76%
Dark Mist	164	53%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
.detuned	186	50%
Digger HD	186	52%
Diner Dash	190	66%
Driver	171	90%
Droplitz	184	91%
Droplitz is a superb puzzler that blends <i>Rez</i> -style layers of music, pipes and dials to create one of the most satisfying puzzlers in years.		
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome II	202	83%
echochrome	169	85%
Elefunk	170	45%
Explodemon	203	70%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
This scrolling-fighter classic from 1989 makes an almost faultless appearance on PSN. Stick it on your download list.		
Final Fantasy VII	181	96%
Even after all these years it still holds up. In fact, our mark seems to have gone up 3% since 1997.		

game	issue	score
Final Fantasy VIII	190	90%
A truly engaging RPG – if you've never experienced the game before then make sure this is the next thing you download.		
Final Fantasy IX	195	90%
Never gets the love it deserves, but this PSN release gives you the chance to experience Square Enix's refreshing RPG all over again.		
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
fiOw	151	90%
Another 90% game for the PS3, another lesson in simple, addictive gameplay. <i>fiOw</i> is an innovative title available on the Network.		
Flower	176	85%
Frogger Returns	190	35%
Funky Lab Rat	201	70%
G-Police	27	84%
Gatling Gears	207	62%
Geon	175	71%
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	191	75%
GTI Club+	174	72%
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	194	72%
Hardcore 4x4	15	81%
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperbolloid HD	188	70%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Joe Danger	194	96%
Simply put, <i>Joe Danger</i> is one of the best games you'll currently find on the PSN. Buy it. Buy it now.		
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Kula World	172	71%
Kung-Fu Live	201	42%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
Lara is back to her best in <i>The Guardian Of Light</i> . <i>Tomb Raider</i> fans will love it and for just £9.99 everyone else should, too.		
Lead & Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Lemmings	151	79%
Limbo	209	90%
We had to wait a while, but just like with <i>Braid</i> it in no way negatively impacts the quality of what is just that – a quality experience.		
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Magic Carpet	179	65%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers	202	84%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers 2012	208	70%
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
Medal Of Honor: Frontline	210	52%
MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Metal Gear Solid	187	93%
While it looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise. Simply essential.		
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Microbot	202	51%
Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge Special Edition	195	94%

game	issue	score
Motorhead	173	60%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Naruto Shippuden: Kizuna Drive	205	42%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	183	60%
N20	37	70%
Outland	207	72%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
Bold, bright, insanely addictive – this re-imagining of the retro classic is an essential addition to anybody's PSN library.		
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	189	94%
So addictive it should come with some sort of government warning. Terrific value for money and a superb little puzzle game.		
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
If you like challenges, shooting, pixels and junk, then this combines all four of those and adds in several splashes of style as well.		
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
Polar Panic	190	65%
Populous: The Beginning	46	70%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Dimension	208	81%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	58	53%
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%
Resident Evil 4 HD	210	93%
One of the best games ever made comes to PSN. Unfortunately it also brings with it a rather high price tag.		
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	01	76%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Sam & Max The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1	194	90%
Clever, funny and taxing in all the right ways, we're very happy that the Freelance Police are on PlayStation 3.		
Sam & Max The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2	194	92%
This is even better than the first episode due to the fact it has better puzzles and even funnier dialogue.		
Sega Rally Online Arcade	208	74%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Scott Pilgrim Vs The World	197	77%
Section 8	193	78%
Section 8: Prejudice	209	80%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype	195	70%
Sonic 4: Episode One	199	82%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Syphon Filter	48	93%
Snakeball	176	92%
Stacking	203	88%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition	209	92%
The best version of one of the best fighting games ever released, or something. We don't know, mainly because Ryan isn't writing this.		
Street Skater 2	178	40%

game	issue	score
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
Telltale Games' excellent modern addition to the <i>Monkey Island</i> franchise finally sees the light of day on PSN. Go pick it up.		
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tetris	202	84%
The Baconing	210	72%
The Last Guy	171	91%
<i>Snake</i> meets <i>Pac-Man</i> meets GoogleMaps. <i>The Last Guy</i> is yet another innovative and compelling addition to the PSN's line-up.		
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
The Secret Of Monkey Island Special Edition	195	92%
LucasArts' classic point-and-click adventure gets an HD makeover and will hopefully be the first of many classics heading to PSN.		
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles in Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	198	53%
Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Tumble	198	70%
Under Siege	207	71%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment	192	87%
Wakeboarding HD	192	65%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
WipeOut	01	89%
WipeOut HD	172	84%
Wolfenstein	181	70%
Worms	179	91%
There's a reason <i>Worms</i> is still going strong, and that's because people never get tired of its fun personality and addictive gameplay.		
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Battle Islands	201	80%
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
Yar's Revenge	206	57%
Zuma	182	78%

PSP mini LISTING

A Space Shooter For Two Bucks	202	55%
Alien Havoc	186	68%
Angry Birds	202	93%
Flinging birds at stuff for four times the price of the original in a less-functional fashion than before has never been so much fun.		
Bloons	186	65%
Brainpipe	186	70%
BreakQuest	186	45%
Edge	202	85%
Field Runners	186	85%
Fortix	186	57%
Funky Punch	186	49%
Hero Of Sparta	186	57%
I Must Run!	202	70%
Kahoots	186	88%
NOVA: Near Orbit Vanguard Alliance	202	63%
Pinball Fantasies	186	90%
<i>Pinball Fantasies</i> was originally released on the Amiga and features four tables and some excellent pinball gaming.		
Puzzle Scape	186	75%
Sky Force	202	68%

J'ACCUSE DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION Square Enix, PS3, 2011 By JC Denton



URNS OUT THIS newfangled *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* didn't fall flat like many people might have expected it to – it's actually done well, both in sales and reviews. Thing is, most people in the world were wrong about it, at least as far as I'm concerned.

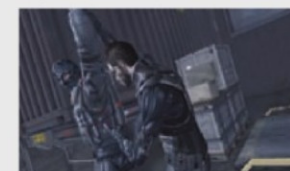
Looking past the fact it's a game that just tries to live up to former glories – former glories it could never even hope to equal or better – we have a game of very little in the way of actual strategy. Why? Terrible AI, obviously.



Crouch. Shoot an enemy. Wait for his friend to come over and check his condition. Shoot friend attending to corpse. Rinse and repeat. That's not a game – that's a pop-up duck shooting gallery. No finesse, no skill.



Many argue you should look beyond this huge issue, as if the total package somehow excuses what is a very flawed system. As if looking at *HR* as one big, fun experience is the way to go. We all know it isn't.



No, I expected more – I demand more. Without good enough AI, you have presented me with a game that just falls flat. It's an insult to the *Deus Ex* name and it makes me sad. Not as bad as *Invisible War*, though.



JOB THE PLAY TEAM SHOULDN'T DO #3 TRANSLATOR



IT TURNS OUT that foreign languages are exactly that – languages of a foreign variety. Here at Play we're not too well-versed with the whole 'non-English' thing, aside from Ryan's ability to pronounce words like *senorita* without sounding like a pillock. So it's no surprise to learn that the job of translator is one we probably shouldn't do.



Accompanying this column are a few images of a couple of Japanese magazines, which we have been trying for a whole few minutes now to translate into something resembling The Queen's English – or at least as close to that of Her Maj as we can muster. Which, to be fair, isn't very close. Hmm. Anyway, we weren't very good.



What did we think accompanied the preview of *Dark Souls* in *Famitsu*? "This is a game about gigantic, amorphous and gelatinous blob of fishy matter," says Ian. *Modern Warfare 3*'s feature, according to Steve, says: "Something about *Modern Warfare 3*." The *Champion Jockey* review? "This is the most popular game Play has ever given away" is probably not what it says, to be honest.



It's good to see that we're not the only magazine in the world that uses stupid little photo-based cartoons, though. While it looks far less exciting than our efforts, we have surmised that the words it uses to accompany the images are... well, not fit for print. We only do so following this warning. Crikey, we'd be bad translators.

game	issue	score
Tetris	186	93%
Vampire	186	67%
Who's That Flying?!	202	64%

PSP LISTING



300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
Ace Combat: Joint Assault	194	79%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	190	45%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Portable	194	84%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bombberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	134	94%
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
Crisis Core – Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%
Dante's Inferno	191	76%
Dead Or Alive: Paradise	192	56%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy	203	79%
Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days	190	87%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
echochrome	169	85%
echoshift	191	73%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Everybody's Tennis	195	88%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
EyePet	199	77%
F1 2009	187	66%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	147	81%
FIFA 11	198	69%
FIFA World Cup 2010	193	65%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy IV: The Complete Collection	204	80%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghost Recon Predator	200	60%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	188	55%
Ghostbusters: Sanctum Of Slime	204	51%
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Gladiator Begins	206	52%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
Gods Eater Burst	202	88%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta	199	79%
Gradius Collection	144	80%

*denotes import review

game	issue	score
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
Half-Minute Hero	191	87%
Hard Corps: Uprising	204	78%
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman!	186	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	187	71%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep	196	88%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
LocoRoco	143	94%
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lord Of Arcana	202	65%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
Medieval Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
Metal Gear Acid 2	138	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	193	92%
A fantastic entry in the <i>Metal Gear Solid</i> series and one of the best games on PSP. Wonderful.		
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Might & Magic: Clash Of Heroes	205	84%
ModNation Racers	193	70%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
Moon Diver	205	46%
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Mytran Wars	179	85%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	136	68%
Naruto Shippuden Legends	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
No Heroes Allowed	199	69%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Patapon 3	205	81%
Patchwork Heroes	192	85%
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoCrois	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ – Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	194	52%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Red Faction: Battlegrounds	205	78%
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%

game	issue	score
Ridge Racer	132	91%
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	158	90%
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 3 Portable	206	78%
Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
Slam Bolt Scrappers	204	73%
Smash Court Tennis	154	58%
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	190	71%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
New modes and characters keep things interesting, while fights are as hectic and solid as ever.		
Spider-Man 3	162	32%
Spinout	149	81%
Splinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
Split/Second: Velocity	200	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Swarm	204	78%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
Tekken 6	187	90%
Fantastic to look at and fast and fluid to play. <i>Tekken 6</i> is the best game of the series on PSP.		
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together	202	81%
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
The 3rd Birthday	203	80%
The Con	153	59%
The Cube	153	64%
The Eye Of Judgment: Legends	191	57%
The Godfather Mob Wars	136	66%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
The Sims 2	137	71%
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
UFC Undisputed 2010	197	80%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyria Chronicles 2	196	87%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord!? 2	192	78%
WipEout Pulse	159	86%
WipEout Pure	138	91%
Exceeding all of our expectations as to what a handheld <i>WipEout</i> game could be, <i>Pure</i> is an essential PSP purchase.		
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%

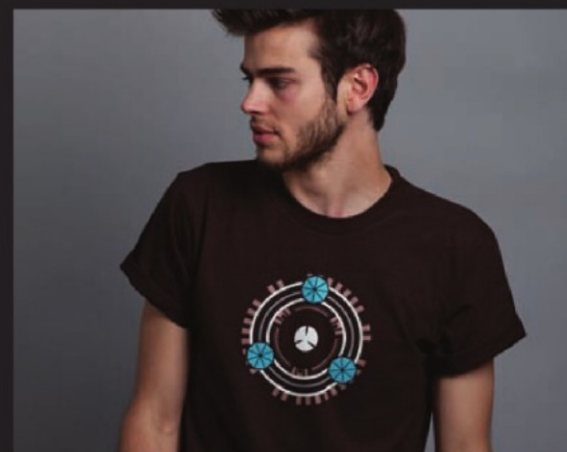
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DARK SOULS™

DEATH COUNTER™

It turns out From Software didn't listen to our suggestion when we spoke to them earlier this year – *Dark Souls* does not have a death counter in it. So we at **Play** have stepped in to help out. Thank us later.

TOTAL: _____

INSTRUCTIONS Use a pen – or pencil – to make what is known as a 'tally mark' every time you die during *Dark Souls*. Once you have finished the game, count the number of tally marks and write the total at the bottom. Deaths: counted. Easy!

NB For repeat plays, or if you're really, really bad at the game you might need a second copy of this page. To get one, simply purchase another copy of **Play** – and repeat as necessary. Even easier!

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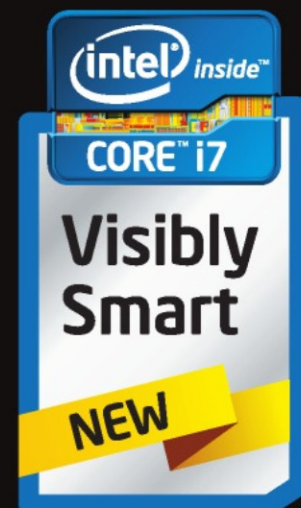


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THE LEGEND BEGINS



“The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword is surely the most hotly anticipated Wii game ever”

The Guardian

18.11.11

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